

Maryland Lawmakers Pass Hate Crime Law and Make Strangulation a First Degree Felony

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UPPER MARLBORO, MD – Prince George's County State's Attorney Aisha Braveboy announces the successful passage of her two priority pieces of legislation to strengthen Maryland's hate crime statute and to make strangulation a first-degree felony by the Maryland General Assembly. The passage of these bills, during a compressed legislative session, demonstrates the State's Attorney's leadership and strong relationships in Annapolis.

Yesterday, lawmakers passed Senate Bill 606 (SB606) and House Bill 917 (HB917), "Criminal Law – Hate Crimes Basis – 2nd Lieutenant Richard Collins, III's Law." The legislation strengthens the current statute, clarifying that hate does not have to be the sole motivation for a hate crime.

"I want to thank our legislative partners for sponsoring this bill. I am especially grateful for the strength and commitment of the Collins family to not only seek justice for their son, but justice for all," Braveboy said. "In 2019, there were zero convictions in all of Maryland's Circuit Courts under the current hate crime statute. The 2nd Lt. Richard Collins III Law will ensure that individuals who commit a hate crime are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

In addition, lawmakers passed House Bill 233 (HB233) and Senate Bill 212 (SB212), "Criminal Law - Assault in the First Degree - Suffocation or Strangulation." This legislation will make strangulation a first degree felony assault.

"Strangulation is one of the most lethal forms of domestic violence. A victim of strangulation is seven times more likely to end up a victim of a homicide. Victims may experience unconsciousness within 5-10 seconds and death within minutes," said Braveboy. "This law will result in more appropriate charging decisions and sentencings and enable state's attorneys in Maryland to save more lives and protect the public."

After the governor's signature, it is anticipated that these laws will become effective on October 1, 2020.

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