

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1732

As of March 28, 2019

Title: An act relating to identifying and responding to bias-based criminal offenses.

Brief Description: Concerning identifying and responding to bias-based criminal offenses.

Sponsors: House Committee on Public Safety (originally sponsored by Representatives Valdez, Entenman, Ramos, Wylie, Gregerson, Dolan, Frame, Jinkins, Ortiz-Self, Orwall, Peterson, Ryu, Stanford, Kilduff, Santos, Thai, Senn, Macri and Pollet).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/07/19, 85-12.

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 3/26/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Renames the crime of malicious harassment to the commission of a hate crime.
- Allows a trier of fact to infer an act was due to the victim's association with a protected class if certain actions are taken.
- Requires the attorney general to convene a Hate Crime Advisory Working Group.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Staff: Shani Bauer (786-7468)

Background: A person is guilty of malicious harassment if the person maliciously and intentionally commits one of the following acts because of the person's perception of the victim's race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, or sensory handicap:

- causes physical injury to the victim or someone else;
- causes physical damage to or destruction of the property of the victim or someone else; or
- threatens a specific person or group of persons and puts that person, or that group in reasonable fear of harm—the fear must be fear that a reasonable person would have under the circumstances.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

"Reasonable person" is defined as a reasonable person who is a member of the victim's race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, or sexual orientation, or has the same mental, physical, or sensory handicap as the victim.

Words alone do not constitute malicious harassment unless the words and circumstances indicate a threat. Malicious harassment is a class C felony.

The definition of sexual orientation for the purpose of malicious harassment was modified in 2009 to refer to the definition of sexual orientation in the Revised Code of Washington chapter addressing discrimination.

Under that definition, sexual orientation means heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, and gender expression or identity. As used in this definition, "gender expression or identity" means having or being perceived as having a gender identity, self-image, appearance, behavior, or expression, whether or not that gender identity, self-image, appearance, behavior, or expression is different from that traditionally associated with the sex assigned to that person at birth.

Summary of Bill: The crime of malicious harassment is renamed to a hate crime offense.

The list of protected classes for which a crime or threat against a person for that reason will constitute a hate crime includes gender expression or identity and within the list of classes, the term sensory handicap is changed to sensory disability.

A trier of fact may infer the act was due to the perception of the victim's association with a protected class if the person:

- defaces religious property with words, symbols, or items that are derogatory to persons of the faith associated with the property;
- places a vandalized or defaced religious item or scripture on the property of the victim; or
- damages, destroys, or defaces religious garb or other faith-based attire belonging to the victim.

The attorney general must convene a multidisciplinary Hate Crime Advisory Working Group for the purpose of developing strategies toward raising awareness of and responses to hate crime offenses. Membership in the working group includes:

- four community members, one appointed by each of the two largest caucuses of the Senate and one appointed by each of the two largest caucuses of the House of Representatives;
- two members appointed by the Governor from organizations representing protected groups; and
- one member appointed by the Governor representing law enforcement.

The working group must recommend best practices for:

- preventing hate crime through public awareness and anti-bias campaigns;
- increasing identification and reporting of hate crimes, including the standardization of data collection and reporting;

- strengthening law enforcement and prosecutorial responses through enhanced training and other measures; and
- supporting victims of hate crime offenses, including ways of strengthening law enforcement collaboration with, and victim connection to, community advocacy and support organizations.

The working group is encouraged to solicit participation and feedback from nonmember groups and individuals with relevant experience. The working group must hold at least four meetings and issue a report with recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature no later than July 1, 2020.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: We have a growing problem of hate crimes in this state. Sadly since 2017, we have a 42 percent increase in the number of reported hate crimes compared to an increase of 17 percent for the country. We are second in the nation, right behind California. Not only is the number of hate crimes increasing, but the severity. The number of incidents that involve the use of a weapon is increasing as is the incidence of sustained injuries as a result of these hate crimes.

Regardless of your ethnicity or beliefs, it is not okay to cause suffering to other people and minority groups. The workgroup will improve Washington's response to hate crimes to help bring our state law into line with other states and name these incidents out for what they are. These crimes are not harassment—they are hate crimes.

In 2006, the Jewish Federation was victim to an awful hate crime, resulting in the death of one employee and the injury of five others. Eleven congregants were murdered this last year in Pittsburgh. The nature of hate crimes are horrendous in that they terrorize a group of people and place them in fear of congregating together.

It is a reality that being a Muslim means facing countless years of harassment. Mosques are frequently targeted for attacks and show up daily in the news. Women who wear a hijab are targeted frequently on buses or on the street. This bill will ensure that targeting someone for their religious garb is a hate crime.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Javier Valdez, Prime Sponsor; Nina Martinez, Board Chair, Latino Civic Alliance; Nancy Greer, President and CEO, Jewish Federation; Monisha Harrell, Board Chair, Equal Rights Washington; Linda Clifton, Anti-Defamation League PNW; Varisha Khan, citizen; Emilia Jones, Attorney General's Office.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.