

GEORGIA NEEDS HATE CRIMES LEGISLATION

A necessary tool for local law enforcement to secure safe communities

Georgia is one of only five states without a Hate Crimes law

- **GBI Director Vernon Keenan has repeatedly asked the General Assembly to pass hate crimes legislation** based on recommendations from the International Association of Chiefs of Police, which expressly recommends protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons within hate crimes statutes.
- Hate crimes are acted out against an individual(s) on the basis of a perceived or actual characteristic (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, etc.). As a result, **hate crimes often impact the entire group or community of the victim(s)**.
- **Without a hate crimes law on the books in Georgia, law enforcement agencies cannot train officers on how to address crimes committed on the basis of a perceived or actual characteristic.** When a hate motivation is left unaddressed or handled improperly by local law enforcement – the result of poor training, or the lack thereof as in Georgia – the situation may escalate and lead to the disruption of public safety. Georgia needs a hate crimes laws to ensure local law enforcement have the skills and tools necessary to secure safe communities.
- **Hate crimes laws do not impact or take away from an individual's freedom of speech.** Speech is not a hate crime. A crime must first be committed, and evidence must be submitted in the court of law to reveal that said crime was acted out against the victim(s) on the basis of a perceived or actual characteristic (historically underrepresented and discriminated groups of people) before it can be deemed a hate crime.
- **Hate crimes laws protect everyone**, not just historically underrepresented and discriminated groups of people. Because hate crimes laws establish protected classes (i.e. *sexual orientation*) and do not protect specific groups (i.e. *gays and lesbians*), majority populations like Christians are protected from violent acts of crime based on their perceived or actual religious convictions (i.e. *religion* as a protected class versus specific groups such as *Muslims, Jews, etc.*)
- **Notable religious organizations** that have called for the passage of hate crimes legislation that include protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons:
 - United Methodist Church
 - Presbyterian Church (USA)
 - Episcopal Church
 - Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 - United Church of Christ
 - American Jewish Congress
 - Unitarian Universalist Association
 - Congress of National Black Churches
- **Notable law enforcement organizations** that have called for the passage of hate crimes legislation that include protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons:
 - International Association of Chiefs of Police
 - National Sheriffs' Association
 - National District Attorneys Association
 - National Coalition of Public Safety Officers
 - National Black Police Association
 - National Latino Police Officers Association

For more information contact Georgia Equality at (404) 327-9898