

Testimony
to the
House Judiciary Committee
in support of
House Bill 1537
February 7, 2023

I am Murray Sagsveen, a semi-retired attorney who provides legal assistance to faith-based and other nonprofit organizations. I personally urge you to support this bill.

Occasionally we will experience an epiphany in truly unexpected situations. Several years ago, I was enjoying a backyard conversation with my daughter's friends, who would identify themselves as part of the LGBTQIA2S+¹ community. They were identifying safe streets, safe bars, safe restaurants, safe retail stores, safe employers, and safety in general.

I was shocked that my daughter and others lived in fear when they are walking to the park, shopping for groceries, or at work. My daughter explained, as only a daughter can do: "Dad, you are a straight, privileged, older, white male. You simply do not understand."

The same is likely true for law enforcement officers. They simply may not understand, because of their upbringing or life experiences, that citizens of color, our LGBTQIA2S+ brothers and sisters, and "others" may live in fear because of the shade of their skin, their sexual orientation, their ethnic background, or many other reasons.

This bill would direct the Peace Officer Standards and Training Board to provide refresher training to:

- help police officers distinguish a bias crime from any other crime;
- help police officers understand and assist a victim of bias crime; and
- ensure a bias crime is accurately reported.

The bill would also establish appropriate penalties for individuals who harm others because of their actual or perceived race, color, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, or ancestry.

Essentially, if enacted, peace officers would be better trained to "serve and protect." Please recommend a "do pass" for this bill.

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¹ This is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual, two-spirit, plus others.