



State Representative David Leland

Sponsor Testimony

House Concurrent Resolution 19

Thank you, Chairman Blessing, Vice Chairman Reinke, and Ranking Member Clyde. It is my honor to present to you today House Concurrent Resolution 19.

Members of this Committee, the rise of neo-Nazism and white nationalism is not a problem that can be ignored by our state. The past decade has seen an appreciable rise in the number of individuals and groups that ascribe to neo-Nazi and white nationalist ideologies. This rise has translated into an increase in the distribution of hateful propaganda that vilifies, dehumanizes and, in many instances, encourages violence against various members of our society, including minorities, women, immigrants, those of different religious backgrounds and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Our nation has been afflicted by a staggering increase in the number of hate crimes committed by individuals that ascribe to neo-Nazi and white nationalist beliefs. The senseless violence at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, another at the African Methodist Episcopal church in Charleston South Carolina, and the death of Heather Hayer in Charlottesville, Virginia are all very recent examples of violence encouraged by these hateful and toxic ideologies. While the aforementioned crimes are not a comprehensive nor complete account of white nationalist and neo-Nazi inspired violence, it is important to note that the Anti-Defamation League, one of America's leaders in the compilation, tracking and recording of hate groups, estimated that at least 34 murders were the result of hateful ideology in the 2017 calendar year. Additional data provided by The Federal Bureau of Investigation noted that criminal incidents that can be directly attributed to or classified as a hate crime has risen nationally by 19% in the past year and those ascribing to white nationalist and neo-Nazi beliefs have accounted for 71% of extremist related fatalities in the United States between 2008 and 2017.

Our state is not immune to the unacceptable acts attributed to the white nationalist and neo-Nazi cause. The Anti-Defamation League branch in Cleveland stated that there have been, at least, 61

hate-based acts in Ohio between 2017 and 2018; these events ranged from the distribution of white nationalist propaganda to a bomb threat made against a Jewish community center.

We need to take this opportunity to publicly and explicitly confront and condemn these individuals and groups who promote and encourage neo-Nazism and white nationalism and show them that their hateful ideology and toxic rhetoric is not welcome in the State of Ohio. We should also send a clear message to our law enforcement agencies to consider these organizations that promote ideologies that seeks to destroy the foundations of our society, advocate violence, create divisions among citizens and yearn to bring about a dystopian future as terrorist organizations.

I thank you, members of this committee, for your time and the opportunity to present this matter to you today, and I urge your consideration in favor of House Concurrent Resolution 19. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.