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Georgia Needs a Hate Crimes Law

Atlanta, GA (May 12, 2020) - The Georgia prosecutors who arrested a white former police officer and his son in the shotgun slaying of an unarmed African American man should have the option of also charging the accused with a hate crime. They don't because Georgia is one of four U.S. states without a hate crimes law.

[The Georgia Coalition for Safe Communities \(GCSC\)](#), a coalition of non-profit organizations formed to urge lawmakers to treat the state's gun violence epidemic as a public health crisis, supports adoption of [HB 426](#), a bipartisan hate crimes law that passed the Georgia House in 2019. The bill has stalled in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Following [arrests](#) May 7 of the two defendants in the February death of 25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery, Gov. Brian Kemp said he supports holding discussions with legislators on a hate crimes bill when they reconvene this year, according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. The 2020 General Assembly was suspended in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Our communities will never be safe if people fear they can be targeted because of who they are and what they stand for," said GCSC co-founder Dorothy Leone-Glasser, executive director of ARxC, a patient advocacy coalition. "If the defendants in the tragic death of Ahmaud Arbery were motivated by racial prejudice, they should be held accountable for targeting a victim based on that hatred. Our laws deter violence by letting people know there will be consequences for their actions. Individuals and groups should know their hate crimes will not be tolerated in Georgia."

Before the 2020 General Assembly session was suspended, GCSC urged Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan and Senate Judiciary Chair Jesse Stone to pass [HB 426](#) as it passed the Georgia House in 2019.

In addition, GCSC has circulated a petition among Georgia's clergy and their followers seeking support for calling on state senators to pass HB 426.

"We ask all Georgians to tell their state senators to pass HB 426, and let them know that Georgia needs a hate crimes bill without further delay," said Leone-Glasser.

GCSC was founded by [ARxC](#), Faith in Public Life's [Outcry Georgia](#) and [Compassionate Atlanta](#).

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