

Legislative Analysis



HATE CRIMES AND INSTITUTIONAL DESECRATION

Phone: (517) 373-8080
<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

House Bills 4474 and 4476 (proposed H-1 substitutes)
Sponsor: Rep. Noah Arbit

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

House Bill 4475 (proposed H-1 substitute)
Sponsor: Rep. Kristian Grant

House Bill 4477 (proposed H-1 substitute)
Sponsor: Rep. Ranjeev Puri

Committee: Criminal Justice
Complete to 6-5-23

SUMMARY:

House Bill 4474 would amend the Michigan Penal Code to revise provisions that define and prohibit hate crimes, provide for enhanced penalties based on factors such as prior convictions, allow a court for alternative sentences under certain conditions, and increase the amount that can be recovered in a civil action.

House Bill 4476 would amend the Michigan Penal Code to define and prohibit the crime of institutional desecration, provide for penalties based on such factors as prior offenses and the amount of damage caused by a violation, allow for alternative sentences under certain conditions, and provide for a civil cause of action.

House Bills 4475 and 4477 are identical and would incorporate the felonies in House Bills 4474 and 4476 in the sentencing guidelines provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

House Bill 4474 would amend provisions of the code that now define and prohibit the crime of ethnic intimidation.

Under current law, a person is guilty of ethnic intimidation if they maliciously do any of the following with the specific intent to intimidate or harass another individual because of their race, color, religion, gender, or national origin:

- Cause physical contact with the other individual.
- Damage, destroy, or deface any real or personal property of the other individual.
- Threaten, by word or act, to do either of the above, if there is reasonable cause to believe that they will do so.

Ethnic intimidation is a felony punishable by imprisonment for up to two years or a fine of up to \$5,000, or both. The act also allows a person who suffers personal injury or property damage as a result of ethnic intimidation to bring a civil cause of action against the offender for an injunction, actual damages (including damages for emotional distress), or other appropriate relief. The civil action can be brought regardless of the existence or outcome of any criminal prosecution. A plaintiff prevailing in such an action can recover damages in the amount of

three times the actual damages or \$2,000, whichever is greater, as well as reasonable attorney fees and costs.

The bill would provide that a person is guilty of a hate crime if they maliciously, and with specific intent, do any of the following to another individual and if, regardless of the existence of any other motivating factors, they intentionally target that individual or engage in the action in whole or in part based on the individual's actual or perceived race or color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, **gender identity or expression**, physical or mental disability, age, ethnicity, or national origin, or their association or affiliation with an individual or group in whole or in part based on one or more of those characteristics:

- Use force or violence on the other individual.
- Cause bodily injury to the other individual.
- **Intimidate** the other individual.
- Damage, destroy, or deface any real, personal, digital, or online property of the other individual without that individual's consent.
- Threaten, by word or act, to do any of the above.

For both HB 4474 and HB 4476, **gender identity or expression** would mean having or being perceived as having a gender-related self-identity or expression, whether or not associated with an individual's assigned sex at birth.

Intimidate would mean a willful course of conduct involving repeated or continuing harassment of another individual that would cause a reasonable individual to feel terrorized, frightened, or threatened, and that actually causes the victim to feel terrorized, frightened, or threatened. However, the term *intimidate* would not include constitutionally protected activity or conduct that serves a legitimate purpose.

Penalties

Except as described under "Enhanced penalties," below, a hate crime would be a felony punishable by imprisonment for up to two years or a fine of up to \$5,000, or both. Instead of or in addition to those penalties, the court, if the defendant agrees, could impose an alternative sentence that may, if the entity chosen for community service is amenable, include an order requiring the offender to complete a period of community service intended to enhance the offender's understanding of the impact of the offense upon the victim and the wider community. In determining the suitability of an alternative sentence, the court would have to consider the criminal history of the offender, the impact of the offense on the victim and the wider community, the availability of the alternative sentence, and the nature of the violation.

Enhanced penalties

If any of the following apply, a person who commits a hate crime would be guilty of a felony punishable by imprisonment for up to five years or a fine of up to \$10,000, or both:

- The hate crime results in bodily injury.
- The person has one or more prior convictions¹ for hate crimes.

¹ A prosecuting attorney intending to seek an enhanced sentence based on a defendant's prior conviction would have to include on the complaint and information a statement listing the prior conviction(s). The existence of the prior convictions would be determined by the court, without a jury, at sentencing or a separate presentencing hearing. A prior conviction could be established by any relevant evidence, such as a copy of the judgment of conviction; a transcript of a prior trial, plea-taking, or sentencing; information in a presentence report; or the defendant's statement.

- Unless the victim and the offender attend the same educational institution, a victim of the hate crime is less than 18 years of age and the offender is at least 19 years of age.
- The person commits the hate crime in concert with one or more other individuals.
- The person is in possession of a firearm during the commission of the hate crime.

In addition to the above penalties, the court, if the defendant agrees, could impose an alternative sentence that may, if the entity chosen for community service is amenable, include an order requiring the offender to complete a period of community service intended to enhance the offender's understanding of the impact of the offense upon the victim and the wider community. In determining the suitability of an alternative sentence, the court would have to consider the criminal history of the offender, the impact of the offense on the victim and the wider community, the availability of the alternative sentence, and the nature of the violation.

Civil cause of action

The bill would allow a person who suffers bodily injury or damage to their property as a result of a hate crime to bring a civil cause of action against the offender for an injunction, actual damages (including damages for emotional distress), or other appropriate relief. The civil action could be brought regardless of the existence or outcome of any criminal prosecution. A plaintiff prevailing in such an action could recover damages in the amount of three times the actual damages or \$25,000, whichever is greater, as well as reasonable attorney fees and costs.

MCL 750.147b

House Bill 4476 would add a new section to the Michigan Penal Code to provide that a person who maliciously and with specific intent destroys, damages, defaces, or vandalizes any of the following, in whole or in part, or threatens by word or act to do so, because of the actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, physical or mental disability, age, ethnicity, or national origin of another individual or group of individuals (regardless of the existence of any additional motivating factors) is guilty of institutional desecration:

- A church, synagogue, mosque, temple, shrine, or other building, structure, or place used for religious worship or other religious purpose.
- A cemetery, mortuary, or other facility used for the purpose of burial or memorializing the dead.
- A school, educational facility, library, museum, community center, or campground.
- A business or charitable establishment, storefront, facility, office, or headquarters.
- The grounds adjacent to, and owned or rented by, any institution, facility, building, structure, or place described above.
- The digital or online assets maintained, authored, rented, or owned by any institution, facility, entity, or place described above.
- Any personal, communal, or institutional property contained in any institution, facility, building, structure, or place described above.

Penalties

A person committing institutional desecration would be guilty of a crime, as shown in the table below, based on the dollar amount of the destruction or injury and whether the person has prior convictions for institutional desecration under either the section being added by the bill or a local ordinance corresponding to that section.

Amount of destruction or injury²	Prior convictions³	Offense and penalty
Less than \$200	With no prior convictions	Misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for up to 93 days or a fine of up to the greater of three times the amount of the destruction or injury or \$500, or both imprisonment and a fine
Less than \$200	With one or more prior convictions	Misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for up to one year or a fine of up to the greater of three times the amount of the destruction or injury or \$2,000, or both imprisonment and a fine
\$200 or more but less than \$1,000	With no prior convictions	Misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for up to five years or a fine of up to the greater of three times the amount of the destruction or injury or \$10,000, or both imprisonment and a fine
\$200 or more but less than \$1,000	With one or more prior convictions where the amount of the destruction or injury is \$200 or greater	Felony punishable by imprisonment for up to five years or a fine of up to the greater of three times the amount of the destruction or injury or \$10,000, or both imprisonment and a fine
\$1,000 or more but less than \$20,000	With no prior convictions	Felony punishable by imprisonment for up to 10 years or a fine of up to the greater of three times the amount of the destruction or injury or \$15,000, or both imprisonment and a fine
\$1,000 or more but less than \$20,000	With two or more prior convictions where the amount of the destruction or injury is \$200 or greater	Felony punishable by imprisonment for up to 10 years or a fine of up to the greater of three times the amount of the destruction or injury or \$15,000, or both imprisonment and a fine
\$20,000 or more	Regardless of any prior convictions	Felony punishable by imprisonment for up to 10 years or a fine of up to the greater of three times the amount of the destruction or injury or \$15,000, or both imprisonment and a fine

Alternative sentence

Instead of or in addition to the above penalties (for misdemeanor offenses), or solely in addition to the above penalties (for felony offenses), the court could, if the defendant agrees, impose an alternative sentence that may, if the entity chosen for community service is amenable, include an order requiring the offender to complete a period of community service intended to enhance the offender’s understanding of the impact of the offense on the victim and the wider community. In determining the suitability of an alternative sentence, the court would have to

² The amounts of the destruction or injury in separate incidents under a scheme or course of conduct in any 12-month period could be aggregated to determine the total amount of the destruction or injury.

³ A prosecuting attorney intending to seek an enhanced sentence based on a defendant’s prior conviction would have to include on the complaint and information a statement listing the prior conviction(s). The existence of the prior convictions would be determined by the court, without a jury, at sentencing or a separate presentencing hearing. A prior conviction could be established by any relevant evidence, such as a copy of the judgment of conviction; a transcript of a prior trial, plea-taking, or sentencing; information in a presentence report; or the defendant’s statement.

consider the criminal history of the offender, the impact of the offense on the victim and the wider community, the availability of the alternative sentence, and the nature of the violation.

Civil cause of action

The bill would allow an entity or institution that suffers damage or destruction to property to bring a civil cause of action against the offender for an injunction, actual damages (including damages for infliction of mental injury or emotional distress), or other appropriate relief. The civil action could be brought regardless of the existence or outcome of any criminal prosecution. A plaintiff prevailing in such an action could recover damages in the amount of three times the actual damages or \$25,000, whichever is greater, as well as reasonable attorney fees and costs.

Proposed MCL 750.147c

House Bills 4475 and 4477 would each amend the sentencing guidelines provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure to provide the following:

- A hate crime is a class G crime against a person with a statutory maximum term of imprisonment of two years. (These are the classification and statutory maximum that now pertain to the felony of ethnic intimidation, which the bills would remove.)
- A hate crime with aggravating factors is a class E crime against a person with a statutory maximum of five years' imprisonment.
- Institutional desecration involving \$1,000 to \$20,000 or with prior convictions is a class E crime against property with a statutory maximum term of imprisonment of five years.
- Institutional desecration involving \$20,000 or more or with prior convictions is a class D crime against property with a statutory maximum term of imprisonment of 10 years.

The bills could not take effect unless HBs 4474 and 4476 were both also enacted.

MCL 777.16g

FISCAL IMPACT:

House Bill 4474 would have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the state and on local units of government. Expanded provisions that define and prohibit hate crimes, and expanded penalties, are likely to result in an increase in the number of convictions. Violations would be felonies, and new felony convictions would result in increased costs related to state prisons and state probation supervision. In fiscal year 2022, the average cost of prison incarceration in a state facility was roughly \$47,900 per prisoner, a figure that includes various fixed administrative and operational costs. State costs for parole and felony probation supervision averaged about \$5,000 per supervised offender in the same year. Those costs are financed with state general fund/general purpose revenue. The fiscal impact on local court systems would depend on how provisions of the bill affected court caseloads and related administrative costs. It is difficult to project the actual fiscal impact to courts due to variables such as law enforcement practices, prosecutorial practices, judicial discretion, case types, and complexity of cases. Any increase in penal fine revenue would increase funding for public and county law libraries, which are the constitutionally designated recipients of those revenues.

House Bill 4476 would have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the state and on local units of government. Including institutional desecration as a punishable offense is likely to result in an increase in the number of felony and/or misdemeanors depending on the amount of destruction or injury caused by the desecration. New felony convictions would result in increased costs related to state prisons and state probation supervision. In fiscal year 2022, the average cost of prison incarceration in a state facility was roughly \$47,900 per prisoner, a figure that includes various fixed administrative and operational costs. State costs for parole and felony probation supervision averaged about \$5,000 per supervised offender in the same year. Those costs are financed with state general fund/general purpose revenue. New misdemeanor convictions would result in increased costs related to county jails and/or local misdemeanor probation supervision. Costs of local incarceration in county jails and local misdemeanor probation supervision, and how those costs are financed, vary by jurisdiction. The fiscal impact on local court systems would depend on how provisions of the bill affected court caseloads and related administrative costs. It is difficult to project the actual fiscal impact to courts due to variables such as law enforcement practices, prosecutorial practices, judicial discretion, case types, and complexity of cases. Any increase in penal fine revenue would increase funding for public and county law libraries, which are the constitutionally designated recipients of those revenues.

House Bill 4475 and 4477 are companion bills to HB 4474 and 4476 and amend sentencing guidelines to revise the current category G offense of “ethnic intimidation” to “hate crime,” to include hate crimes with aggravating factors as a category E offense, and to include institutional desecration involving \$20,000 or more or with prior convictions and institutional desecration involving \$1,000 to \$20,000 or with prior convictions as category D and E offenses, respectively. The bills would not have a direct fiscal impact on the state or on local units of government.

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.