



DATE: June 12, 2020

TO: Lt. Governor Geoff Duncan
Speaker David Ralston
Senate Committee on Judiciary
House Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security

FROM: Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA)
Technology Association of Georgia (TAG)

RE: **Tech Industry Support for HB 426 and HB 636**

On behalf of our members and the hundreds of technology companies we represent, we appreciate the opportunity to express support for HB 426 and HB 636, two bills that will help the State more effectively address, prevent, and respond to hate crimes and unwarranted use-of-force in law enforcement.

All Americans have a stake in effective response to violent bigotry. Hate crimes especially, merit a priority response because of their special impact on the victim and our community. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, approximately 90% of reported hate crimes in the U.S. involved violence, and about 29% were serious violent crimes (defined as rape or sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault). Georgia is just one of four states without a hate crimes law.

Research further suggests that failure to address this unique type of crime could cause an isolated incident to explode into widespread community tension, leaving individuals feeling isolated, vulnerable, and unprotected by the law. By making members of minority communities fearful, angry, and suspicious of others—and of the power structure that is supposed to protect them—these incidents can damage the fabric of our society and fragment communities, as we’ve recently seen play out in communities across the country.

Law enforcement use-of-force has also long been a topic of national discussion. However, the opportunity to analyze information related to use-of-force incidents and to have an informed dialogue is hindered by the lack of statistics. Data collection on use-of-force incidents in Georgia would provide State and federal lawmakers an essential baseline for understanding the nature and magnitude of this issue, and it would allow the State to implement data-driven improvements in the local response of police and the criminal justice system. Major law enforcement organizations are also working in collaboration with federal agencies to develop a National Use-of-Force Data Collection system. By passing HB 636 into law, Georgia can ensure the effectiveness of the system and that the State is part of the national discussion to improve law enforcement response in the U.S.

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You may be asking why the technology industry is weighing in on issues seemingly unrelated to the private sector. For company leaders, diversity is a clear path to creating a more innovative organization. People with different backgrounds and experiences often see the same problem in different ways and come up with different solutions, increasing the odds that one of those solutions will be a success. In a fast-changing business environment, such responsiveness leaves companies better positioned to adapt and address challenges, such as cybersecurity and privacy—issues that are critically important to the functioning of government as well as Georgia citizens. While our members understand that conversations on race can be painful, hard, and personal, as an industry we are committed to being open and to actively listening to minority voices within the office as well as the communities in which we work. Doing so, unlocks tremendous power for our communities and helps realize a shared vision of lasting meaningful change.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support of HB 426 and HB 636. We hope you see that implementation of these laws can deter and limit the potential for a hate crime incident to explode into a cycle of violence and widespread community disturbances. Together, business leaders, human rights groups, civic leaders, and law enforcement officials can advance police-community relations by demonstrating a commitment to be both tough on hate crime perpetrators and sensitive to the special needs of hate crime victims. Education and exposure are the cornerstones of a long-term solution to prejudice, discrimination, bigotry, and anti-Semitism. Hate crime laws and effective responses to hate violence by public officials and law enforcement authorities can play an essential role in deterring and preventing these crimes.

About CompTIA

CompTIA supports policies that enable the information technology industry to thrive in the global marketplace. We work on behalf of our 120-plus member companies to promote investment and innovation, market access, robust cybersecurity solutions, commonsense privacy policies, streamlined procurement, and a skilled IT workforce. Visit www.comptia.org/advocacy to learn more.

About TAG

TAG's mission is to Connect, Promote, Influence and Educate Georgia's technology ecosystem to advance the innovation economy. Through those four foundational pillars TAG serves the technology community, helping to support, grow and ignite tech leaders, companies and the overall Georgia economy. Visit www.tagonline.org to learn more.