March 13th, 2023

The Honorable Reginald Jones-Sawyer
Chair, Assembly Public Safety
1021 N Street, Room 111
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1064 (Low) – Support

Dear Chair Jones-Sawyer,

The California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA), one of the state’s foremost grassroots senior and disability advocacy organizations, representing over 1 million Californians, is proud to support AB 1064 (Low), which strengthens existing hate crime laws by clarifying “bias motivation” to address the purposeful targeting of victims.

Hate crimes are notoriously under-reported in official statistics and hard to prove in court.

Common sense would dictate that if a criminal selectively targets victims because of a protected characteristic listed in the hate crimes law, those crimes would be hate crimes. But under current law, that isn’t enough to prove a hate crime. For most practical purposes, it takes slurs or other biased words or symbols, regardless of any other evidence.

AB 1064 closes this loophole by stating that evidence of bias against a victim’s or victims’ protected characteristic may be determined by the criminal’s actions, specifically including selectively targeting victims based on the characteristic – making these crimes hate crimes.

Likewise, under current law, factors that officers are required to consider in determining whether a crime is a suspected hate crime requiring investigation include such attitudes as resentment, revulsion, callousness, or a perception of the victim’s vulnerability due to the victim being perceived as being weak, worthless, or fair game because of a protected characteristic. These are common attitudes motivating anti-disability hate crimes, the most under-reported hate crimes, which has major overlaps with all other categories of hate crimes. But under current law, such biased attitudes aren’t enough to prove a hate crime.

AB 1064 also closes these loopholes.
Under AB 1064, we’ll get better statistics in the monthly reports law enforcement agencies are required to post on their web sites and in the annual statewide reports. We’ll also get more convictions of the criminals who terrorize our communities.

Affording Seniors viable resources to age with grace, dignity and independence - such as protecting our personal safety and reducing the likelihood of hate crimes - not only represent CARA’s foundational principles but we believe will ensure a safer, more accessible and inclusive California for our aging community; AB 1064 (Low) codifies these aspirations into law by enhancing the safety of our Seniors, BIPOC, marginalized communities and all Californians.

On behalf of CARA and our 1 million members comprising of, seniors, older adults and people with disabilities, we respectfully ask for your YES vote.

Sincerely,

Hene Kelly
Chair, Legislative Committee
California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)

Keith Umemoto
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)