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**Multnomah County DA's Office releases "We Need to Know" campaign
to encourage bias crime reporting**

Today, the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office released its "*We Need to Know*" social media campaign surrounding bias crimes that occur in our community during the coronavirus pandemic.

"We need to know about bias crimes in our community so law enforcement can investigate these matters and if appropriate, refer them to our office for prosecution," said Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill. "We have been aggressive in prosecuting bias crimes to ensure victims are supported. Nationally, we have seen headlines about Asian Americans being discriminated against. We will not tolerate that kind of hate against any race, ethnicity or protected class in our community. Multnomah County prides itself on being open and inclusive to all individuals."

The "*We Need to Know*" campaign encourages community members to report any bias crime to law enforcement. The "*We Need to Know*" campaign social media graphics have been translated into multiple languages (***Chinese – Simplified, Chinese – Traditional, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Tagalog, Thai and Vietnamese***) so community members can share.

[To view and download the social media graphics, please click here.](#)

Since March 8, 2020, when Oregon Governor Kate Brown declared a state of emergency in response to the coronavirus, the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office has received one bias crime-related case for prosecutorial review.

Our office is working closely with law enforcement agencies throughout Multnomah County to investigate bias crimes and to then, if supported by law, to prosecute any bias crime.

Under Oregon law, bias crimes can include assaults that involve injury, attempted assaults, actual or perceive threats, attempted or actual property damage, or offensive physical contact.

A person's race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or national origin is protected under Oregon law.

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Community members who believe they have been subjected to a bias crime should report the incident to law enforcement.

“As a crime victim, it’s not your duty to determine whether there is evidence to prove a crime. That’s our responsibility, and one we take very seriously. Fear should never hold someone back from reporting a crime,” said DA Underhill. “Reporting a bias crime to law enforcement will prompt a dedicated and immediate response. In our community, there are resources and services available to you as a victim even during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

It is possible that more instances of bias crimes could occur as Oregon begins its gradual “reopening,” and as more public encounters occur.

The Multnomah County District Attorney’s Office was an active participant of the Oregon Attorney General’s Hate Crimes Task Force and helped draft the language that was in Senate Bill 577. The law, which went into effect on July 15, 2019, renamed the crime of “intimidation” to “bias crime,” added gender identity to the list of protected categories and removed the requirement that two or more people commit the crime in order to make it a felony in certain circumstances.

All potential bias crime cases, whether they are a felony or misdemeanor, are reviewed by the Violent Crimes Unit within the Multnomah County District Attorney’s Office. If a misdemeanor crime is issued, the felony-level attorney will retain the case.

If you are the victim of a bias crime assault or you are witnessing one, immediately call 9-1-1. If you are the victim of a bias crime and the suspect is no longer present or if you have information about a bias crime committed in the past, call the non-emergency line at 503-823-3333.

COVID-19 Notice

The health and well-being of all employees and community members we serve is a top priority for the Multnomah County District Attorney. Our office is working with the court, defense bar, local law enforcement and other system partners to carefully balance the needs of public health and public safety.

For information about the operational changes implemented by the District Attorney’s Office in response to the novel coronavirus, please [click here](#).

#MCDA#

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