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MAYOR

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HB1452

March 11, 2025

TO: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 1452 – Hate Crimes and Hate Bias - Definitions of Sexual Orientation and Hate Bias Incident

POSITION: Support

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 1452.

HB 1452 alters language in Article – Criminal Law, §10-301 of the Annotated Code of Maryland to make sexual orientation more inclusive to the broad range of all identities an individual may possess or perceptions of that individual's identity. The legislation also codifies hate-bias incidents as non-criminal acts of bias against individuals and groups with protected identities for the purpose of requiring the Maryland Department of State Police to collect, analyze, and disseminate information on not just hate crimes, but hate bias incidents in total.

These legal changes are reflective of more contemporary understandings of sexual orientation. This bill will help close blind spots in Maryland law that is intended to protect queer individuals by not limiting the sexual orientations they may be victimized due to based upon "male or female homosexuality, heterosexuality, or bisexuality." Under HB 1452, individuals are covered not just for their actual sexual orientation, but their perceived sexual orientation, even if incorrect, by the person that victimizes them in a hate crime or hate bias incident. The combination of these provisions, and the codification of hate bias incidents, will ensure the totality of crimes and bias incidents are covered and reported by the Maryland Department of State Police. Along with reporting requirements for hate-bias incidents, these changes should provide the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights, Maryland Office of the Attorney General, and local civil rights agencies such as Baltimore City's Office of Equity and Civil Rights access to more robust data on trends regarding the proliferation or reduction of discrimination and hate in the State of Maryland, including homophobia. Other states such as Oregon and Washington have codified the definition of hate bias incidents.

For the above stated reasons the BCA respectfully request a **favorable** report on HB 1452.