



Testimony - HB 1452, Hate Crimes and Hate Bias - Definitions of Sexual Orientation
and Hate Bias Incident

Favorable

House Judiciary Committee

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Honorable Chair Clippinger and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents over 23,000 workers across Maryland, a diverse union of every ethnic, socio-economic, gender identity, and orientation. We wish to express our strong support for House Bill 1452, which seeks to refine the definitions of “sexual orientation” in hate crime statutes and establish a clear definition of “hate bias incidents” for improved data collection and response.

Hate crimes and hate bias incidents have a profound impact on our communities, creating fear, division, and lasting harm. By modernizing the definition of “sexual orientation,” this bill ensures that the law reflects the full spectrum of identities and experiences, acknowledging that discrimination and bias can be based not only on an individual’s identity but also on how they are perceived by others. This distinction is crucial in protecting Maryland residents from targeted harm.

Additionally, HB 1452 introduces an essential definition of “hate bias incident,” capturing acts of hostility that may not meet the threshold of a criminal offense but still contribute to an environment of intimidation and exclusion. The inclusion of slurs, threats, and discriminatory materials in this definition ensures that law enforcement agencies and policymakers have the necessary data to track and address patterns of bias before they escalate into more severe violence.

By enhancing data collection on both hate crimes and hate bias incidents, HB 1452 equips Maryland with the tools needed to address discrimination proactively. It empowers law enforcement, policymakers, and advocacy groups to develop more

effective prevention strategies, support impacted communities, and uphold Maryland's commitment to inclusivity and justice.

We urge the committee to support HB 1452 and take this important step toward ensuring safety, dignity, and equal protection for all Marylanders.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Travis Simon
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