

March 11, 2025

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)-Maryland respectfully requests a favorable report on HB1452.

NAMI Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a network of more than 58,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for people living with mental illnesses, their families, and the wider community.

HB1452 would provide more clarity to law enforcement related to hate bias incidents, and better data can lead to more effective prevention of these incidents. HB1452 does this without criminalizing any new behavior or changing current reporting requirements. It will simply make reporting more efficient and accurate by updating definitions to making the language more accurate.

Prevention of hate crime is a priority for NAMI Maryland and the mental health advocacy community. People who regularly experience acts of hate crimes and bias incidents are far more likely to have mental health conditions than the general public.¹ We support accurate detection and reporting of these incidents, including appropriate language describing sexual orientation and gender identity.

NAMI Maryland believes that HB1452 will refine the definition of hate bias incidents and update the definition of sexual orientation and identity to allow for more accurate reporting of harmful incidents around the state, and for those reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB592.

¹ Amy Novotney, *Hate crimes are on the rise in the U.S. What are the psychological effects?* Decades of research suggest hate crimes can lead to a wide range of mental health issues, including increased rates of depression, anxiety, and PTSD, American Psychological Association (2023), <https://www.apa.org/topics/gun-violence-crime/hate-crimes#:~:text=What%20are%20the%20mental%20health,study%20in%20the%20journal%20Pediatrics>.

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