

EZRA MACLEOD TOWNE

Testimony Favorable to SB0950: Conversion Therapy - Prohibitions and Causes of Action

March 6, 2026

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair, Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice-Chair, esteemed members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Ezra Towne, and my pronouns are they/them. I am writing to you today because **I strongly support SB0950, and ask for a swift and favorable report from the Judicial Proceedings committee.**

As a queer, transgender person, I am deeply concerned about conversion therapy, and I am grateful for the protections that the state of Maryland already has on the books that ban it. But our previous legislation was not quite enough.

SB0950 strengthens the definition of conversion therapy - directed at those whose sexuality and gender identity or expression differ from the "norm" - as medical malpractice subject to penalties against the provider of that therapy when a plaintiff is damaged by it. It further defines what those penalties may include, and increases the length of time in which an individual can come forth with a medical malpractice complaint.

The provisions within SB0950 also allow a plaintiff of a conversion therapy case to sue a provider for psychological damage, in addition to economic damages, noneconomic damages, punitive damages, and attorney's fees or court costs. This level of detail is exactly what is needed to make a conversion therapy ban effective. It makes providers of conversion therapy, and those who enable them, liable of a crime if it causes harm to an individual under their care.

Much of the opposition I have heard about conversion therapy bans circulates around the idea of pushing a client towards a new sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression. This would be unethical behavior for any therapist or mental health provider. The conversations that happen around sexual orientation and gender identity or expression are long exploratory processes that must take into consideration all possible outcomes. For example, if a client undergoing gender therapy reverses course, the therapist guides them through what that means for them just as they did when the client thought their gender identity did not match their sex at birth. That's what a therapeutic relationship is - exploration, not predetermination.

For these reasons, I strongly support SB0950 - Conversion Therapy - Prohibitions and Causes of Action and ask for a favorable report without amendments.

Sincerely,
Ezra MacLeod Towne
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