

## **Written Testimony of Shannon Minter**

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Maryland Senate Judicial Proceeding Hearing on SB 950

March 2026

Chair and members of the Committee, thank you. My name is Shannon Minter. I am the Legal Director of the National Center for LGBTQ Rights, and I have litigated conversion therapy cases in courts across the country for over thirty years.

This bill is legally sound, well-precedented, and overdue.

Maryland law does not permit limitations periods to run against plaintiffs who could not reasonably have recognized their injury. Conversion therapy survivors are exactly that kind of plaintiff. These dangerous practices are designed to make LGBTQ people believe they are broken and at fault for their own suffering. Survivors frequently internalize that message, blaming themselves for years before recognizing that what was done to them was harmful and wrong. The psychological injuries — depression, post-traumatic stress, suicidality — are serious and lasting.

Under current Maryland law, the limitations period applicable to a conversion therapy survivor depends on the license held by the practitioner who caused the harm. Claims against practitioners who qualify as “health care providers” under the malpractice statute — including psychologists and licensed certified social workers-clinical — must be filed within five years of the injury or three years of discovery, whichever occurs first. Claims against other licensed mental health practitioners — including licensed clinical professional counselors and licensed clinical marriage and family therapists — are governed by the general three-year limitations period. Both limitations fail conversion therapy survivors in the same fundamental way. For survivors of childhood conversion therapy, the clock may expire before they finish high school — years before most survivors are even capable of recognizing the source of their harm.

This bill ensures that malpractice claims against all licensed mental health practitioners are governed by the same extended limitations period — whether the practitioner is subject to the five-year limitations period under § 3-2A or the general three-year period under § 5-101. For survivors who were subjected to conversion therapy as minors, the bill ensures that no arbitrary time limit bars the courthouse door — consistent with what Maryland has already done for childhood sexual abuse survivors under the Child Victims Act of 2023. The Maryland Supreme Court upheld that Act in February 2025, in *Roman Catholic Archbishop of Washington v. John Doe*, holding that there is no vested right in the expiration of an

ordinary statute of limitations and that previously time-barred claims may be revived when there is a real and substantial relation to the problem addressed. Conversion therapy survivors present a compelling equitable case under the same framework: the infliction of serious harms, a psychological dynamic that suppresses recognition of that harm, and limitations structures that expire before most survivors are capable of acting. This bill simply ensures that survivors who are unfairly disadvantaged by existing limitations structures are not turned away at the courthouse door.

This bill reflects a straightforward application of principles Maryland law already embraces — and extends those principles to ensure that all conversion therapy survivors, regardless of which licensed practitioner caused their harm, have a meaningful opportunity to seek justice. I urge the committee to report it favorably. Thank you.