

## **SUPPORT SB950 Conversion Therapy – Prohibitions and Causes of Action**

Hearing date: 3/10/26, 1 pm in Judicial Proceedings

Dear Chairperson Smith, Vice Chairperson Waldstreicher and members of the Senate Judicial Committee:

We represent the Coalition for LGBTQ+ Students and we urge you to **SUPPORT SB950**.

In 2018 the Maryland General Assembly passed the Mental Health Protection Act, a landmark bill that banned conversion therapy for minors in Maryland, making us the 11th state to enact such a ban. The law provided important protections for LGBTQIA youth by ensuring that no mental health provider licensed in Maryland would perform “conversion therapy” to change a young person’s gender identity or sexual orientation.

Conversion therapy is a range of dangerous and illegitimate practices that falsely claim to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. In other words, it attempts to make LGBTQIA+ youth heterosexual and gender-conforming. It is based on the false assumption that being LGBTQIA is abnormal or pathological. It has been proven to be totally ineffective and harmful.

Consider the case of Sam Brinton, who was subjected to conversion therapy as a 12-year-old boy after he disclosed to family that he was attracted to a male friend. He underwent years of so-called “therapy” designed to eradicate his attraction to males. After being subjected to emotionally and physically abusive practices (including verbal intimidation, shaming, and the infliction of physical pain to his body via extreme temperatures and electric shock), Sam became suicidal, depressed, highly anxious, and avoidant of intimacy. He was still attracted to males but he learned to hide these feelings. It has taken Sam years to recover from his horrendous experience with conversion therapy. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/24/opinion/gay-conversion-therapy-torture.html>

Research shows that conversion therapy poses significant risks for LGBTQIA youth, including depression, decreased self-esteem, substance abuse, homelessness, and suicide. A 2020 study published in the American Journal of Public Health found that LGBTQ+ youth who underwent conversion therapy were more than twice as likely to report having attempted suicide and more than 2.5 times as likely to report multiple suicide attempts in the past year. It is condemned by every major medical and mental health organization, including the American Psychiatric Association, the American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association.

Bans on conversion therapy are supported by a majority of Americans and by all reputable health care practitioners according to The YouGov/Economist poll. However, many states and our current federal government want to bring this harmful practice back into the mainstream. Conversion practitioners have legally challenged state-level bans for years, and the Trump administration is now actively supporting these efforts. For example, on March 4, 2025, President Donald Trump promoted dangerous pro-conversion-practice dog whistles, such as describing social transition—when a transgender person begins using new pronouns or a new name—as “child abuse.”

**Clearly, we need additional protections to prevent conversion therapy practitioners from harming youth in Maryland.**

SB950 is critical because it would provide enforceable legal protections against conversion therapy. It would help to protect LGBTQIA youth from devastating health risks, including increased rates of suicide attempts, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. This bill would also help to prevent internalized stigma caused by conversion therapy as it instills a sense of being broken, shameful and mentally ill.

SB950 is also important because it gives victims of conversion therapy the grounds to sue based on malpractice and it ensures that youth who were subjected to the practice as minors can still seek justice as adults. It recognizes that some child victims may not recognize the harmful impact until they are adults. It provides a deterrence to providers via economic pressure, as people who practice conversion therapy would be required to pay a higher insurance premium. Finally, it prohibits deceptive advertising by banning false or deceptive statements regarding its efficacy.

In sum, SB950 is important because it makes conversion therapy a legally actionable form of abuse, and it supports Maryland's status as a safe place for LGBTQIA people.

**Please support SB950 and protect vulnerable LGBTQIA youth in Maryland.**

Sincerely,

The Coalition for LGBTQ+ Students

[www.coalition4lgbtqstudents.org](http://www.coalition4lgbtqstudents.org)

