



**Maryland Commission
on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

Bill Title: Conversion Therapy – Prohibitions and Causes of Action

Bill Number(s): HB1209 / SB950

Position: FAVORABLE

Date: March 2, 2026

Submitted by: Jeremy Browning, Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

To:

House Health Committee

The Hon. Heather Bagnall, Chair
The Hon. Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair

House Judiciary Committee

The Hon. J. Sandy Bartlett, Chair
The Hon. Debra Davis, Vice Chair

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

The Hon. William C. Smith, Chair
The Hon. J. Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair

Senate Finance Committee

The Hon. Heather Bagnall, Chair
The Hon. Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair

Testimony on behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs:

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs respectfully submits this testimony in strong support of HB1209 / SB950.

The Commission was established by the General Assembly to assess the challenges facing LGBTQIA+ Marylanders, inform state leadership, and advance policies that protect health, safety, and dignity. Our vision is a Maryland where all LGBTQIA+ people are able to live full and authentic lives. Conversion therapy is inconsistent with that vision.

Every major medical and mental health organization in the United States has determined that efforts to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity are harmful and ineffective. The scientific and clinical consensus is clear that these practices are associated with depression, anxiety, suicidality, shame, social withdrawal, and long-term psychological harm.

The Commission's 2026 statewide [Community Needs Assessment Preliminary Findings](#) reinforces the urgency of this issue. Over 22% of LGBTQIA+ respondents reported seriously considering suicide in the past 12 months, and more than 61% reported lifetime suicidal

ideation. In addition, 36% reported sometimes avoiding medical care due to anticipated discrimination, and 13% reported always avoiding care for that reason.

These findings demonstrate that many LGBTQIA+ Marylanders are already navigating significant mental health stressors and barriers to affirming care. Practices that seek to change a person's identity compound shame, undermine trust in providers, and deepen the very disparities the State is working to reduce.

HB1209 / SB950 takes a comprehensive and thoughtful approach. The bill:

- Clarifies that psychological injury resulting from conversion therapy constitutes a medical injury under Maryland law.
- Establishes a clear civil cause of action for individuals harmed by conversion therapy.
- Removes the cap on noneconomic damages in cases involving conversion therapy, recognizing the severity and lasting nature of psychological harm.
- Prohibits the provision of conversion therapy for compensation and criminalizes false or misleading claims about its efficacy.
- Creates a Conversion Therapy Surcharge Fund to help reimburse successful plaintiffs for costs incurred as a result of receiving conversion therapy.

Importantly, this legislation does not restrict affirming or exploratory therapeutic practice. It clearly distinguishes between harmful efforts to change sexual orientation or gender identity and supportive care that helps individuals understand and navigate their identity.

Maryland has long positioned itself as a state that grounds health policy in evidence and protects vulnerable communities. This legislation aligns our civil and criminal frameworks with established medical consensus and ensures that individuals who have been harmed have meaningful access to justice.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs respectfully urges a favorable report on HB1209 / SB950.

Reference:

Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs. (2026). *Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment: Preliminary Findings Report* (in partnership with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore).