

Committee: Judiciary

Bill: House Bill 513 Hate Crimes and Hate Bias- Definitions of sexual orientation and hate bias incident

Hearing: February 10, 2026

Position: Favorable

As chair of the Baltimore City LGBTQIA+ commission, I support HB513 which updates Maryland's statutory definitions of *sexual orientation* and *hate bias incident* to ensure accurate reporting, stronger protections, and a clearer understanding of the harms experienced by LGBTQ+ Marylanders.

Local reporting from the Baltimore City Office of Equity & Civil Rights demonstrates that LGBTQ+ residents continue to experience harassment and discrimination that often goes unclassified or unreported under current state definitions.¹ Requiring law enforcement agencies to collect and report standardized data is a core strength of HB513. Consistent statewide reporting is essential for understanding the true scope of hate-based incidents, identifying patterns across jurisdictions, and ensuring that policymakers and community organizations have the information necessary to respond effectively.

Data proves that without clear definitions and mandated reporting, many incidents affecting LGBTQ+ Marylanders remain invisible in state-level data, limiting the ability to allocate resources, guide prevention strategies, and support those most impacted. HB513 enables Maryland agencies to more accurately track incidents, identify emerging patterns, and direct resources to communities experiencing the greatest impact.

Furthermore, HB513 strengthens public health by addressing the well-documented mental health impacts of hate crimes and hate-motivated harassment, which are associated with higher rates of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress symptoms.² This bill ensures Maryland's laws finally reflect the lived realities of LGBTQ+ people, strengthening our state's ability to confront hate with clarity, accuracy, and accountability.

For these reasons, the Baltimore City LGBTQIA+ Commission and I respectfully urges a favorable report on the bill.

Respectfully,

M. Tica Torres Bolivar, MHA NHLBA
Chair, Baltimore City LGBTQIA+ Commission

¹ Baltimore City Office of Equity & Civil Rights. ***Annual Discrimination Complaint Data***.

² *Hate Knows No Boundaries: Online Hate in Six Nations*. Reichelmann, Hawdon, et al. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2020.1722337>