

MARYLAND PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY



February 27, 2026

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The Honorable Sandy Bartlett
Judiciary Committee
101 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Heather Bagnall
Health Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office
Building Annapolis, Maryland
21401

Support With Amendment: HB1209- Conversion Therapy - Prohibitions and Causes of Action

Dear Chairwoman Bartlett & Bagnall and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS/WPS represent over 1200 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

The MPS, along with several national organizations including the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and the American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, does not support the use of conversion therapy, also known as reparative therapy, which is based on the false assumption that homosexuality is a disorder. Since 1973, the APA has held the position that homosexuality per se is not a diagnosable mental disorder; therefore, it does not require treatment or therapy, and published position statement entitled "Issues Related to Homosexuality," in which it confirmed that APA "*does not believe that same-sex orientation should or needs to be changed, and efforts to do so represent a significant risk of harm by subjecting individuals to forms of treatment which have not been scientifically validated and by undermining self-esteem when sexual orientation fails to change. No credible evidence exists that any mental health intervention can reliably and safely change sexual orientation; nor, from a mental health perspective does sexual orientation need to be changed.*"

MPS primarily believes that "treatments," such as conversion therapy or reparative therapy, have questionable scientific validity. Furthermore, these "treatments" can be very harmful to participating individuals contributing to anxiety, depression, and the possible attempts at self-harm. This is especially true in the case of young people whose mental and emotional development is still occurring.

Although we support the overall intent bill, we would like to suggest two amendments to the language of the bill:

1. Strike the removal of the cap on non-economic damages, and
2. Remove the criminal liability section

MPS/WPS, therefore, ask this honorable committee for a favorable report on HB 1209, with the proposed amendments. If you have any questions regarding this testimony, please contact Lisa Harris Jones at lisa.jones@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society & Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee