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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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**Testimony in Support of HB 1209
Conversion Therapy - Prohibitions and Causes of Action**

Good afternoon, Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Williams and honorable members of the Judiciary committee. Thank you for this opportunity to present HB 1209 – **Conversion Therapy - Prohibitions and Causes of Action**. This bill extends the statute of limitations for bringing a civil action due to harms caused by sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts and clarifies that courts may consider expert medical testimony and scientific consensus when evaluating harm.

Sometimes referred to as “sexual orientation change efforts” or “reparative therapy”, conversion therapy is not a legitimate “therapy”, but rather, a range of dangerous and discredited practices that seek to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. There is no credible evidence to support this; to the contrary, it is harmful and shown to pose dangerous health risks for LGBTQ youth and is condemned by every prominent professional medical and mental health association.

In 2018, this body passed HB 902 (SB1028), which protected minors from being subjected to conversion therapy by state-licensed medical providers by prohibiting certain practitioners from engaging in these practices. However, that bill did not establish a specific civil remedy tailored to the delayed and complex harm caused by these practices, leaving many survivors without a meaningful opportunity to seek justice.

HB 1209 builds upon Maryland’s existing protections by ensuring survivors of conversion therapy have adequate time to seek legal remedies for the harm they experienced and clarifying that courts may consider scientific evidence and expert testimony consistent with established medical consensus when evaluating such harm.

Under this bill, a claim may be brought at the latest of the following:

- If the survivor was under 18 years old at the time, they may bring a claim before age 40.

- If the survivor was over 18 years old, they may bring a claim within 10 years of the last session in which sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts took place.
- Within five years of discovering injury or illness due to sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts.

Additionally, this bill clarifies that in establishing harm and causation of harm from conversion therapy, courts may consider expert testimony, scientific literature, and other evidence regarding harms that can be caused by sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts and that the full context under which the change effort was given and received may be considered.

The trauma of conversion therapy often takes years to fully surface, and the shame it creates silences survivors, meaning most are prevented from seeking justice by the time they recognize the harm they endured. It is unconscionable that state-licensed professionals can inflict scientifically documented harm under the guise of therapy and escape accountability because survivors were silenced by trauma. Survivors of these abusive and discredited practices deserve justice, accountability, and the full protection of Maryland law.

We are working closely with stakeholders regarding their concerns about removing the cap on non-economic damages provisions in the bill to identify amendments to address those issues and others that may be raised in this hearing. These amendments are intended to ensure that the bill's language aligns with existing Maryland civil law.

Thank you for your consideration and I ask for a favorable report.