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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1209**  
**Conversion Therapy - Prohibitions and Causes of Action**  
*Judiciary and Health Committees*  
**March 4, 2026**

**Social Work Advocates for Social Change (SWASC) strongly supports HB 1209**, which creates clear civil and criminal consequences for providing conversion therapy, and provides survivors of this harmful practice with a legal remedy for the delayed and complex trauma that these practices cause. HB 1209 creates a route for justice by establishing a 20-year statute of limitations for adults and removes time limits for survivors who were minors seeking economic, noneconomic, punitive damages, and attorney’s fees.

**Conversion therapy, also known as “Sexual Orientation Change Efforts” (SOCE), has been denounced by every major medical and mental health association in the United States**, including the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, and the American Medical Association.<sup>1</sup> Research links it to lasting harms such as depression, anxiety, suicidality, substance abuse, trauma, family estrangement, and deep shame.<sup>2</sup> Although Maryland banned the practice in 2018, survivors still lack a clear legal path to seek justice for harms that often surface years later.<sup>3</sup>

**HB 1209 builds on the existing law banning conversion therapy by addressing accountability rather than prohibition**, which was the focus of the 2018 legislation. HB 1209 follows established precedent, as Marylanders often have routes to seek justice when they are harmed and experience forms of abuse, such as under the Maryland Child Victims Act. Survivors of conversion therapy deserve the same opportunity to hold those responsible accountable under the law.

**The National Association of Social Workers states that it “condemns any and all forms of conversion practices**, as they are harmful to the mental health and well-being of LGBTQIA2S+ people” and affirms that social workers have an ethical duty to provide evidence-based, non-discriminatory care.<sup>4</sup> As social work students and professionals, SWASC joins the condemnation of these practices and supports the civil remedies that this bill will facilitate.

**Maryland survivors of conversion therapy are still living with the lasting harm these practices caused while facing legal barriers that prevent accountability.** The General

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<sup>1</sup> The Trevor Project. (2021, August 27). *So-Called “Conversion Therapy” - FAQs & Mental Health Effects*. The Trevor Project. Retrieved March 2, 2026, from <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/so-called-conversion-therapy-and-the-lgbtq-youth-mental-health/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/so-called-conversion-therapy-and-the-lgbtq-youth-mental-health/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/so-called-conversion-therapy-and-the-lgbtq-youth-mental-health/>

<sup>4</sup> National Association of Social Workers. (n.d.). *Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*. NASW. Retrieved March 2, 2026, from <https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/LGBTQIA/Sexual-Orientation-and-Gender-Diversity>



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Assembly has already recognized that delayed trauma requires expanded access to justice, as reflected in the 2023 Maryland Child Victims Act, and survivors of conversion therapy deserve that same pathway to accountability. Without this legislation, providers who inflicted scientifically documented harm on children and adults will continue to evade meaningful consequences simply because the damage often takes years to fully surface.

**Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges a favorable report on HB 1209.**

*Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.*