

Mercy Baptist Church

2920 Joseph Biggs Memorial Hwy,

North East MD 21901

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Pastor, Stephen Nissley

February 16, 2026

HB 722

Position: UNFAVORABLE

SENT VIA MY MGA

Maryland General Assembly

House Judiciary Committee

Attn: Del. J. Sandy Dartlett, Chair

Attn: Del. Debra Davis, Vice Chair

Re: *HB 722 Child Sex Abuse Claims – Doctrine of Charitable Immunity – Abrogation*

Dear Madam Chair, Madam Vice Chair & Members of the Committee:

I am Stephen Nissley, Pastor of Mercy Baptist Church. We are a Maryland religious corporation and are located at 2920 Joseph Biggs Memorial Hwy, North East MD 21901. I am writing concerning House Bill 722 Child Sex Abuse Claims – Doctrine of Charitable Immunity – Abrogation. The position of Mercy Baptist Church and the members of its congregation, for HB 722 is unfavorable (UNF).

Mercy Baptist Church has been in existence since 1983. The nature of its work is fundamentally centered on fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ through worship, evangelism, fellowship, discipleship, and service.

We have for years relied upon Maryland's charitable immunity protection in maintaining our work and ordering our finances. Our congregation counts on having their contributions go towards the mission of the church and its ministries. We are able to provide the services that we do to our congregation and our community because of it.

HB 722 is deeply unfair and harmful to charities. Mercy Baptist Church has relied upon the doctrine of charitable immunity since it was formed in 1983. This reliance has dictated whether we have obtained insurance, coverage limits, and coverage exclusions. Maryland has now removed any statute of limitations for child sex offense cases. The abrogation of charitable immunity would compound the effects of the removal of the statute of limitations for child sex abuse cases and requires charities to defend cases where the alleged abusers and supervisors are often long deceased, witnesses are missing, and records are lost due to passage of time.

The impact of this bill is not only on our ongoing ministries, but on our very existence. One substantial liability claim could well end our ministry altogether, resulting in a loss to our community of the services that we freely provide.

We also believe that this bill violates our constitution rights as citizens of Maryland and of the United States. We and other charities have reasonably relied upon the assurance of immunity beyond the limited of their insurance in planning their affairs and arranging insurance. The retroactive removal of immunity covering cases dating back 80 years or more is an act of betrayal by the State that violates the fundamental principles of due process.

Our church leadership, our congregation, and we believe our community strongly opposes HB 722. We are writing to voice our opposition and ask that the bill be defeated.

Thank you for your attention and we are available for questions and discussion as needed.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,

Stephen Nissley (Pastor)