



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive  
cball@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov  
FAX 410-313-3051

February 4, 2021

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21041

Re: Testimony **IN SUPPORT** of SB 46: Crimes – Mitigation – Race, Color, National Origin, Sex, Gender Identity, or Sexual Orientation

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Committee:

I commend Senator Lam for introducing Senate Bill 46. This bill would prohibit defendants accused of murder or assault from using their victim's race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation to justify or excuse their violent actions. The District of Columbia and 11 other states have banned this erroneous defense and passage of Senate Bill 46 will ensure that Maryland continues to be on the forefront of protecting vulnerable populations.

Maryland case law currently allows a defendant to use the "LGBTQ+ panic defense" to reduce charges of murder and assault. The "LGBTQ+ panic defense" asserts that the discovery or perception of a person's sexual orientation, sex, or gender identity drove the defendant to kill or harm in the heat of the moment; under a reduced mental capacity; or because of a perceived sense of imminent danger.

From 2016 to 2019, the Maryland State Police registered 130 bias motivation incidents against the LGBTQ+ community. This somber statistic signals that our State can do more to protect LGBTQ+ residents in our communities across the state. Senate Bill 46 will make necessary legal changes and provide an element of security and justice for those in the LGBTQ+ community and their families.

Howard County prides itself on its inclusivity and commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination and as County Executive, I have prioritized protecting human rights. In November 2019, I signed an Executive Order creating an LGBTQ+ Work Group, which advises my Administration on best practices and strategies to affirm, highlight, and protect members of our LGBTQ+ community.

Last year, I changed the name of the Office of Human Rights to the Office of Human Rights and Equity in addition to creating the County's first Equity Manager position. Our manager will identify necessary practices or policies needed to ensure equity, implement anti-bias training, competency-building, and develop strategic partnerships in our community. Howard County's vibrant LGBTQ+ community has been vital in creating a safer and more inclusive place for all residents to thrive.

Senate Bill 46 will reassure our residents that however they identify or who they love cannot be used against them if they fall victim of a crime. For these and many more reasons, I urge your support of Senate Bill 46.

Sincerely,

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive