



SB0554: Written Testimony - SUPPORT

February 11, 2020

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

We are writing in **SUPPORT of SB0554: Crimes-Mitigation-Sex, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation**. This legislation would no longer allow the discovery, or perception, of one's sexual orientation or gender identity to constitute "legally adequate provocation to mitigate" murder or manslaughter, enabling a lesser charge or reduced sentence. Any form of "panic" defense is discriminatory and justifies harmful stereotypes surrounding the LGBTQ+ community. This form of defense not only proclaims LGBTQ+ victim's lives as somehow less worthy than others, but it provides an excuse for violence against them. The ability to use this form of defense promotes discrimination against an already marginalized and threatened community, proven to be even worse for transgender women of color.

Research from the FBI shows that, in 2017, there were a total of 1,249 hate crimes against the LGBTQ+ community. Statistically, 1 in 5 LGBTQ+ individuals living in the United States will experience some sort of hate crime in their lifetime. Allowing the "panic" defense will only further put their lives in danger. State law should promote and support equality for everyone. No one's identity or expression should be accepted as a legitimate threat to those who would do any type of violence. Everyone should be encouraged to live their lives freely and openly without fear of discrimination. LGBTQ+ victims' lives should be considered just as important in the eyes of the courts.

We urge you to support this bill and make sure every victim gets the equal justice they deserve, regardless of who they are or who they love. We believe that together, we can achieve equality for all.

We urge a **Favorable Report on SB0554**.

Thank you,

Nicolle Campa She | Her | Hers
Metro DC PFLAG
Board President

Mark Eckstein He | Him | His
Metro DC PFLAG
MD Advocacy Chair

www.pflagdc.org

Keeping Families Together!