



SB 46 Bias or Panic Defense Bill

**Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 4, 2021**

Position: SUPPORT

We, the board of directors of Annapolis Pride, support SB 46 – Repeal of The Bias or Panic Defense Bill.

In a democracy all law, be it local, state, or federal, should be applied equally to all its citizens. But the “panic defense” essentially says that violence is more acceptable when applied to LGBTQ+ people.

Recent FBI data reports that sexual identity ranks third amongst bias and hate crimes just behind race and religion. They also indicate a rising trend in LGBTQ+ bias in the past few years.

The “panic defense” strategy says that something inherent in the victim justified the violence brought upon them. Historically this strategy has focused on anti LGBTQ+ hate crimes in order to justify lighter sentencing for perpetrators of violent crimes. It essentially codifies prejudice as acceptable. It is no less equivalent to saying if a woman is assaulted it is because of how she is dressed, or a person of color appears threatening because they were jogging through a white neighborhood.

It is with these scenarios in mind that we also support the inclusion of the other protected groups (such as race, religion, national origin, etc.) within the language so that such legal strategy can not be used against any victims of hate crime regardless of its form or motivation.

The potential for the panic defenses to be used in Maryland with the full blessing of the law is a blatant miscarriage of justice and would send the unmistakable message to LGBTQ citizens and other minority groups that their suffering and lives are not equal to those of other victims of violence.

Thus, we respectfully urge this committee to issue a **favorable report for SB 46.**

ANNAPOLIS PRIDE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Leslie Anderson
Patricia Baig
Jeremy Browning
Jasmin Carey

Pastor Dianna Caroll
Isabella Firth
Chris Haley
Molly Hammond
Mark Hildebrand

Sheren Kelly
Jenny Llamas
Eric Lund
Joe Toolan