



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN®

House Economic Matters Committee
Maryland General Assembly
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

March 3, 2020

Re: SUPPORT for H.B. 1147, Testimony from the Human Rights Campaign in support of the bill requiring single-user public restrooms to be designated for use by all genders

Dear Chairperson Davis and Members of the Committee:

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), on behalf of its more than three million members and supporters nationwide, including more than 160,000 members and supporters in Maryland, thanks you for the opportunity to submit testimony on H.B. 1147, an important and common-sense measure that would require single-user public restrooms to be available for use by individuals of all genders.

The Human Rights Campaign is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans, HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBTQ people and realize a world that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all. As an advocate for LGBTQ individuals, HRC is a strong supporter of legislation that helps ensure the safety and well-being of transgender and gender non-conforming people.

While most people take unhindered access to restrooms and other sex-segregated facilities for granted, this is far from reality for many transgender and gender non-conforming people who often face stress, anxiety, prejudice, and even violence when accessing sex-segregated spaces like public restrooms.¹ Ensuring that single-occupancy public restrooms are available to everyone regardless of gender is an important step in addressing this problem and provides a safe space for transgender and gender non-conforming residents. All-gender single-user restrooms is also a matter of common sense and efficiency. Non-gendered single-occupancy facilities reduce wait times for everyone and eliminate the problems people with disabilities or others who have personal attendants of a different gender sometimes face when accessing restrooms. Moreover, making single-use restrooms open to all makes it easier for parents or guardians with children of a different gender to access public restrooms.

¹ See Jody L. Herman, *Gendered Restrooms and Minority Stress: The Public Regulation of Gender and its Impact on Transgender Lives*, The Williams Inst., UCLA Sch. of L., 68.

H.B. 1147 would expand access to single-occupancy public restrooms by requiring businesses and public buildings to use gender-inclusive signage for these facilities. More than a dozen municipalities, including Baltimore,² have enacted similar laws. Additionally, five states—California, Vermont, New Mexico, Maine, and Illinois—currently have laws requiring that all single-occupancy restrooms in public places be available to people of all genders. It is time that Maryland join these states and localities in enacting this common sense legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of this critical bill to protect the safety and well-being of LGBTQ individuals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah Warbelow".

Sarah Warbelow
Legal Director
Human Rights Campaign

² See Baltimore City, Md., Ordinance 19-265 (Jun. 17, 2019).