



March 2, 2020

RE: Places of Public Accommodation and Public Buildings – Single–Occupancy Public Restrooms – Availability (HB 1147)

Dear Chairman Davis, Chair of the House Economic Matters Committee:

The National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) writes to express our strong support for the Places of Public Accommodation and Public Buildings – Single–Occupancy Public Restrooms – Availability (HB 1147), which would clearly align Maryland law with the current International Plumbing Code, which requires single-occupancy public restrooms to be open to all persons. The 2018 and 2021 versions of the International Plumbing Code require that all single-occupancy public restrooms be available to everyone, regardless of gender. While the 2018 IPC was incorporated into Maryland’s regulatory code last year, many managers of public buildings and many businesses serving the public are unaware of current code requirements. This is because prior versions of the IPC, and therefore of Maryland code, required even single-user restrooms to be separated by gender. Readers of the current regulations would need to cross-reference the 2018 IPC to be aware of the change. By clearly incorporating current, more inclusive standards in statute, the Accessible to All Act would help make clear to all places of public businesses and buildings in the state that single-user facilities should be open to all.

Separating single-occupancy facilities by gender is unnecessary and causes delay and inconvenience in accessing public facilities for everyone. Many Marylanders have had the experience of waiting in line for one public restroom while another sits empty. Many parents with young children have hesitated over accompanying a child of another gender into the restroom.

Unfortunately, many transgender people continue to face harassment and discrimination in access to public facilities. Out of 662 Marylanders in the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, 58% said they avoided using a public restroom in the past year because they were afraid of confrontations or other problems they might experience. In the same survey, 34% of Maryland respondents limited the amount that they ate or drank to avoid using the restroom in the past year, and 7% were actually denied access to a public restroom in the past year.

This bill would eliminate all of these problems with respect to single-user facilities, and assist businesses and localities in complying with existing code provisions. NCTE strongly urges lawmakers to support this simple bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mara Keisling', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Mara Keisling
Executive Director