

## Testimony for the House Ways and Means Committee, February 26, 2020

### In SUPPORT of HB1204, County Boards and Public and Nonpublic Prekindergarten Programs and Schools – Discrimination – Prohibition

Chair Del. Kaiser, Vice-Chair Washington, and Committee Members –

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the committee in support of HB1204 that prohibits discrimination towards all students, prohibits retaliation against students and their families when complaints are filed, establishes criteria for complaint and remedy processes, and requires schools to develop civil rights protections for all students. As a parent of a transgender former Baltimore County Public Schools student, LGBTQ+ advocate, and Early Childhood educator, trainer, and consultant, I would like to address a few points.

Students' homes and schools can be the places that produce most harm both physically and emotionally, as well as can be the places that have the most love and support. Schools are the most effective when they take active measures to include all students and create supportive environment. This happens not just in the classroom but also in the hallways, cafeteria, clubs, teams, and other school activities. When students face discrimination, harassment, confrontation, and exclusion, they cannot learn to their fullest capacity. Additionally, students who are the perpetrators of harassment and violence are also not capable of learning to their fullest. It is imperative to establish concrete and consistent policies throughout the state that provide guidance and support.

It is not enough to rely on individual students, parents/guardians, teachers, or administrators to correct the problems, as has been happening in most of our schools. All too often, students have been dismissed by the adults they are supposed to trust including counselors, teachers, and administrators. This is the main reason my son did not come out until after high school graduation – he witnessed his peers dealing with additional stress and tension from the school personnel not being supportive or helpful. Other parents have told me that some teachers were uncomfortable addressing specific concerns from their transgender students because the teachers did not have guidance or their own support from the school or school system.

There are two changes to HB1204 I suggest:

- In the section 4-108, 5, (ii), that begins with, "DISCRIMINATING AGAINST ANY PERSON BECAUSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL'S RACE, ...", I suggestion including "AND THEIR FAMILY OR GUARDIANS." I have witnessed discriminatory actions when enrolling children when their families are part of the LGBTQ+ community, and this bill does not adequately address this.
- Along with including non-public pre-kindergarten programs that receive state funds, I suggest including child care centers, nursery schools, and family child care homes. The current MSDE regulations and Maryland EXCELS standards do not address this type of discrimination.

Thank you,

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