

House Bill 1204

An Act Concerning County Boards and Nonpublic Prekindergarten Programs and Schools -
Discrimination - Prohibition
SUPPORT

February 26, 2020

House Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland General Assembly
2 East Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Representatives,

I write to you today in support of **House Bill 1204**; An Act Concerning County Boards and Nonpublic Prekindergarten Programs and Schools - Discrimination - Prohibition. This legislation would codify anti-discrimination protections for all students in grades pre-K to 12 attending public schools or schools that receive public funds.

I am writing in support of this legislation because despite the “guidance” that is provided by the state, there is not necessarily enforcement of that guidance. As a GSA (Gender Sexuality Alliance) advisor I hear firsthand from students who arrive as freshman at Patapsco High School their wide experiences in elementary and middle school. In fact, students report their experience varies widely even within classrooms in our own building. I know that you value all children and their right to a free, appropriate education among their peers without fear and abuse. When principals and teachers can ignore these guidelines without consequence, something needs to change. Spelling out these non-discriminatory policies will provide legal grounds to address inequitable treatment in schools. Something all our children deserve.

I’m sure that I don’t need to tell you the dire statistics regarding LGBTQ students in Maryland. Roughly 3 in 5 (57%) experienced at least one form of anti-LGBTQ discrimination at school during the recorded year (GLSEN 2017 School Climate Survey). Furthermore, fewer than 1 in 5 (18%) attended a school with a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy that included specific protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Fewer than 1 in 5 (17%) had a policy or official guidelines to support transgender or gender nonconforming (trans/GNC) students.

In the interest of equity and the wellbeing of the children of Maryland, I urge you to pass **House Bill 1204**.

Sincerely,

Natalie Avallone, NBCT
Patapsco High School & Center for the Arts
navallone@bcps.org