

## Senate Bill 993

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

2/19/2020

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

Dear Senators,

I am writing in support of the Senate Bill 993. This is an imperative bill; as a school system we need to pass for the safety and support of ALL our students. I am the GSA advisor at my school and the stories I have heard from the experiences of my LGBTQ students are heartbreaking. I recall a student who was kicked out of her home because a teacher outed her to her grandparents. The teacher told the Grandmother that she had seen her granddaughter kissing another girl. The teacher had no right to do this and because of her actions, this student had to find somewhere else to live at the age of 15. Another student confided in me that they often do not come to school because they feared of being bullied and taunted every day for their gender expression. They could not take the daily verbal beating. I do not blame this child because who wants to go into a building every day and be ridiculed? On a daily basis, 46% of LGBTQ students hear some negative remarks about gender expression and 24.1% mostly hear these negative comments based on the National Climate Survey of 2017.

Another finding of the National Climate Survey in 2017, 46% of LGBTQ students experienced discrimination for their gender expression. When teachers and administrators choose not to step in when LGBTQ discrimination occurs, LGBTQ students take it into their own hands to seek refuge, hence the lack of attendance in school. Why would any student want to go to school if they are being victimized for who they are and are not supported or protected by their teachers and administration who they should be able to trust? According to the National Climate report, in 2017 63% of LGBTQ students missed school due to bullying because of their sexual orientation and 61% for their gender expression. This is unacceptable.

As a school system and for the safety of our children, Senate Bill 993 must be put in place to address these vital issues within the schoolhouse. Race, color, age, religion, sex, disability, marital status and national origin are all a part of who a person is, as well as gender identity and sexual orientation. It is our duty as educators to protect ALL our students. In addition, the schoolhouse is where we teach the necessity for civility, we should not be hypocritical. In doing so, protecting our LGBTQ students and taking a stand against prejudices towards gender expression and sexual orientation will help to establish a more civil and positive school environment. Not doing so will result in detrimental harm to those targeted individuals, that may lead to more severe and fatal circumstances. Suicide amongst LGBTQ youth is 3 times higher than heterosexual students based on GLSEN reports. We need to help our LGBTQ youth.

When a student's safety is on the line because they have no support or protection from the school system, this encourages antagonists and victimizers to feel that they can say and do what they want based on their own prejudiced opinions. Discrimination then is prevalent, and harm continues to be done to those left unprotected. Senate Bill 993 is meant to keep our LGBTQ students and all students safe to promote civility in our schools and ultimately in society. It is imperative that this is passed, for the sake of our LGBTQ student population.

Thank you for your time and for reading my testimony.

Respectfully,

Angela Bennett

Teacher

Franklin High School

[adunn@bcps.org](mailto:adunn@bcps.org)