

Bill: HB1204
Title: Student Equal Rights Protection Act (Non-Discrimination Protections in Education)
Date: February 26, 2020
Committee: House Ways and Means Committee
Position: Support

Dear Delegate Anne R. Kaiser, Chair, Delegate Alonzo T. Washington, Vice Chair and Esteemed Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

My family and I live in Montgomery County where our two children attend public middle school. Several years ago one of our children came out as transgender and we were quickly catapulted into a whole new world. At the center of our focus was to determine if Montgomery County Public Schools could adequately protect our marginalized child. We are well aware of the misconceptions some people hold regarding transgender people and how those misconceptions can result in wide spread discrimination. We see this type of discrimination playing out all over the country and in our state. As a parent, this is terrifying and we want to do everything in our power to protect our child and others like them.

Unfortunately, our child has faced discrimination and bullying at school on at least two occasions and we found that there is no clear process in which to file a complaint. Our school and the school district does not have a policy and we struggled to remedy the situations on our own. Out of fear of retaliation and without clear footing, we did not pursue action beyond the school. Fortunately, the school worked with us, but it fell short. What happens to the children who are not in a school willing to do the right thing? What about the parents who do not have the resources that my family has? What message does it send to the educational staff, children and families that LGBTQ+ kids in Maryland are not being fully protected? I think it sends a message that our kids are not of value and that makes me so sad and leaves many of us frustrated.

We are grateful that parts of Maryland law have protections in public accommodations, employment and fair housing, but we are deeply concerned that there are no codified anti-discrimination protections in a place where our child spends most of their time. We also understand that the Maryland State Department of Education has guidelines, but they are just that. We need actual legal protections of a codified anti-discrimination policy. We need to know that our child, and all LGBTQ+ students, receive the protections they deserve. No LGBTQ+ student in Maryland public schools should be left to fend for themselves. The stakes are too high. Their lives are at stake.

Please see our children and give them the protection that not only they deserve, but which they desperately need. I strongly urge a favorable report on HB1204.

Respectfully,
Sarah Cuneo
A Mom in Transition