

HB1204
The Inclusive Schools Act
02/26/2020
Ways & Means Committee
Support

To the Honorable Anne R. Kaiser and esteemed members of the committee:

I am a long-time resident of Maryland and the mother of three children currently enrolled in MD public schools. I am here today to urge you to support SB 933.

Many years ago, when my husband and I were deciding where we wanted to raise our family, we chose Maryland, in part, because of the strong public schools. Whenever parents ask me how my kids are doing and how school is going, I am proud to say that our local school system has been able to meet the unique needs of each of our children, including our transgender child.

Last year, when my child's gender transition was imminent, I sat down to review the guidelines of our local system regarding gender identity non-discrimination. These guidelines were developed using MSDE guidance on the same subject as a source. I wasn't sure whether I would find something that barely scratched the surface of addressing her safety or if it would be something more. To my great comfort, I found guidelines that were welcoming and affirmative of a transgender student's experience. Because our school system and our state had those guidelines, my child's life at school has been changed for the better. She continues to thrive, make friends, and most importantly learn every day that she walks through the school doors!

However, what keeps me up at night, is that what exists currently in Maryland is simply a set of guidelines. Unlike other parts of Maryland law such as public accommodations, employment and fair housing, Maryland's education laws do not have codified anti-discrimination protections. Yes, MSDE does provide stated guidance, but guidance does not provide the legal protections of a codified anti-discrimination policy. And a lack of clear policy means that a trans student's experience could be different from district to district, school to school, and even classroom to classroom. My heart aches for parents of LGBTQ+ kids who have not had the same experience as our daughter. Legislation is needed to codify the MSDE guidance, and that is why I am here urging you to pass SB 933.

Thank you.

Elizabeth Raboin-Gettleman