

Trans Recognition Maryland

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February 26, 2020

The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser
House Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building, Room 131
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

HB 1204: County Boards and Public and Nonpublic Prekindergarten Programs and Schools – Discrimination – Prohibition

SUPPORT

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the Ways and Means Committee:

On behalf of Trans Recognition Maryland, a network of nonbinary and transgender individuals and allies across Maryland, I fully and strongly support HB 1204: County Boards and Public and Nonpublic Prekindergarten Programs and Schools – Discrimination – Prohibition. This bill will prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability in all Maryland public schools and private schools that receive state funding (such as BOOST vouchers), from Pre-K to Grade 12. This bill will establish a documented complaint and remedy process involving the Maryland State Department of Education to resolve instances of discrimination and, importantly, prohibit retaliation against students, parents, or guardians that file a complaint of discrimination. And finally, this bill will require schools and school boards to develop and maintain civil rights protections policies for students, employees, and schools.

Discrimination against transgender students, specifically, remains a serious problem in Maryland schools. According to the most recent comprehensive survey of Maryland

transgender residents¹, “78% of those who were out or perceived as transgender at some point between Kindergarten and Grade 12 (K–12) experienced some form of mistreatment, such as being verbally harassed, prohibited from dressing according to their gender identity, disciplined more harshly, or physically or sexually assaulted because people thought they were transgender.” Specifically, “58% of those who were out or perceived as transgender in K–12 were verbally harassed, 28% were physically attacked, and 14% were sexually assaulted in K–12 because of being transgender.” Indeed, “23% faced such severe mistreatment as a transgender person that they left a K–12 school.”

There currently exist no sufficient legal protections covering discrimination against students in Maryland schools. It’s unfortunately far too common to hear about instances of discrimination on the basis of gender identity in schools all across Maryland. Urgent action is required to begin making progress and protecting transgender students from the harm they face every day when they are just trying to access the same education as every other student in Maryland.

I respectfully urge this committee to issue a **favorable report for House Bill 1204**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Cass Caveney
Trans Recognition Maryland

¹ 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey – Maryland State Report
<https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/USTS%20MD%20State%20Report.pdf>