

Greetings Senator Feldman, Senator Kagan, and the members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

I am David Yost, my pronouns are They/Them and I've been a public high school teacher in Baltimore for over a decade. I am writing in support of SB 199.

For most of my career, I have been the advisor of our school's gender and sexuality alliance. Before coming to teach and Baltimore, I was raised by the St. Mary's County Public School system.

Growing up, I did not have access to comprehensive health education like the one referred to in SB 199. Because of this, I didn't have access to any language to describe myself. I knew every day that I didn't fully fit into the binary genders as presented nor the sharp mold of heterosexuality. As a way of trying to force others and myself into this strict mold of heterosexuality, I parroted deeply homophobic things to my gay friends. I'm certain that I caused harm and I know it is because my school system failed to help me grow in a way that would allow me to respect my peers and know myself better.

Now, as a GSA advisor for the past decade, I have seen how the exclusion of LGBTQIA people from health curriculum has made my students feel erased from their own school system. Recently, things have shifted in the Baltimore City health curriculum and school policies so that my LGBTQIA students are fully seen and known. I cannot imagine a world without these pieces in place.

And I'm worried that the opt out provisions may allow people to grow up not knowing about themselves or knowing how to respect their peers much like I did.

Thank you for your time and consideration in supporting SB 199.