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February 8, 2023

**Testimony in Support of SB0199 — Primary and Secondary Education - Comprehensive Health Education Framework - Established**

The Board of Directors of Annapolis Pride enthusiastically supports Senate Bill 0199 which will require each Local Education Agency to have an age-appropriate, comprehensive, medically accurate, and unbiased health and sexual Education curriculum that acknowledges and affirms students with a variety of sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. Simply put, it is essential that all of Maryland’s young people receive comprehensive, medically accurate, and age-appropriate health and sexual education beginning in Kindergarten and continuing through high school. Without comprehensive education in the early years, students enter adolescence without the information they need to make responsible and safe decisions. The consequences of inadequate health and sexual education can lead to unhealthy relationships, unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, bullying, sexual assault, and discrimination. Comprehensive health and sexual education is vital for young people’s overall educational achievement and future success.

Furthermore, the lack of a mandate requiring medically accurate, age-appropriate, comprehensive, and unbiased sexual health education puts Maryland students, and the public health, at undue risk. LGBTQ+ students need and deserve the same access to accurate, up-to-date information about their sexual health as any other student. Research has shown that comprehensive health and sexual education leads to healthier teenage outcomes and encourages responsible sexual behaviors.

Despite the belief of many that children are too young to understand gender identity and human sexuality, this assertion is scientifically false. From the moment they are born, children are receiving messages and stereotypes about how they are supposed to look and behave from peers, books, and media. Studies show how the messages kids receive about gender influence them at very early ages and place them into strict boxes, preventing them from reaching their full potential. As found by the American Academy of Pediatrics, “by age four, most children have a stable sense of their gender identity”. This is a core aspect of one’s identity that comes from within each of us and is an inherent aspect of one’s makeup.

**For these reasons, Annapolis Pride respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 199**

Respectfully submitted,

Jaden Farris  
Board Member  
Annapolis Pride