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BILL: Senate Bill 189 - Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts - Development of Content Standards and Implementation

DATE: January 17, 2024

POSITION: FAVORABLE

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

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Annapolis Pride's mission is to advocate for, empower, and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community in Anne Arundel County to live fully and authentically. Our vision is a safe, equitable, and anti-racist community where people of all identities thrive.

As such, Annapolis Pride **supports** Senate Bill 189, which would ensure the integration of inclusive and diverse narratives from all genders, races, ethnicities, and identities into Maryland's English language arts curriculum.

Absent from most textbooks and assigned readings, the narratives of historically underrepresented groups remain almost invisible within our curriculum, painting an inaccurate and incomplete picture of the world. This reality underscores the urgency for this legislation, which confirms a commitment to ensuring a diverse curriculum that reflects the rich tapestry of our society.

The benefits of inclusive curriculum extend far beyond mere visibility as the experiences of **all** students are greatly impacted by the inclusion of this information. For instance, narratives that are inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community models enhance LGBTQ+ students' engagement in their schools and provide valuable information about the LGBTQ+ community. Further, students in schools that had LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum (taught positive representations of LGBTQ+ people, history, and events) reported less anti-LGBTQ+ biased language and less anti-LGBTQ+ victimization, were less likely to feel unsafe and to miss school for safety reasons. They also reported having more accepting peers, had higher GPAs, reported a greater sense of belonging, and increased psychological well-being, in comparison to students whose schools did not have an inclusive curriculum.¹

Echoing Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop's metaphor of books as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors, this legislation will allow all students to peek into diverse realities and step into narratives beyond their own.² Especially for LGBTQ+ students, their stories, transcend mere exploration; they become mirrors reflecting identities long relegated to the shadows.

Accordingly, Annapolis Pride respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on Senate Bill 189.

¹ Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., & Menard, L. (2022). The 2021 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in our nation's schools. New York: GLSEN.

² Bishop, R. S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom, 6(3), ix-xi.