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Favorable Testimony on Bill SB0738: Freedom to Read Act

February 21, 2024

Chair Senator Brian J. Feldman, Vice-Chair Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, and esteemed members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

I write to you today as a transmasculine nonbinary adult invested in the well-being of transgender and nonbinary library users in the state of Maryland. I am also a facilitator of a trans-led peer support group in Montgomery County. **My testimony on this bill is favorable, and I urge you to move this bill promptly through committee with a favorable vote.**

SB0738 would establish state standards for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ (and other controversial) books in libraries that receive state funding. The bill also would alter some of the aspects of the currently existing state library committees to account for the additional work and funding to ensure that our libraries are as inclusive as possible - for all residents of Maryland.

I am currently 49 years old. If more resources had been available to me in state and local libraries, and in school libraries, I would have been much much younger than 42 when I realized that there was a word for someone like me: nonbinary - neither male nor female, but somewhere in between. I would have undergone physical transition to match my internal gender identity with what the world perceives about my gender in my twenties.

I would also have been a much happier teenager and young adult, rather than the depressed and suicidal person that I once was. If there had simply been any media at all that covered what trans and/or nonbinary gender identities were back then, I would have seen people like myself thriving as their authentic selves.

I applaud the Education, Energy, and the Environment committee for hearing this bill, considering its full impact, and working to move the bill onto the Senate floor via a favorable report.

Transgender and nonbinary Marylanders deserve to see themselves represented in the literature and other media at our libraries - just as much as any other person does. **I ask the committee for a favorable report on SB0738, the Freedom to Read Act, so that the bill moves promptly to the House of Delegates for a full vote.**

Sincerely,



Ezra Towne
District 18