



**Maryland Commission  
on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

**TESTIMONY OF JEREMY BROWNING  
DIRECTOR, MARYLAND COMMISSION ON LGBTQIA+ AFFAIRS  
FAVORABLE STATEMENT ON HB0577  
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - HOMELESS  
SHELTER LICENSING PROGRAM - ESTABLISHMENT**

**February 15, 2024**

Environment and Transportation Committee

The Hon. Marc Korman, Chair  
The Hon. Regina T. Boyce, Vice Chair

Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Boyce, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee, my name is Jeremy Browning(he/him), and I am the Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs. The Commission was created by the 2021 Maryland General Assembly, and later altered in 2023, to assess challenges facing our LGBTQIA+ communities, establish best practices and recommendations for LGBTQIA+ inclusion, and provide testimony to legislative and administrative bodies.

On behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs we strongly support House Bill 577 to create a Homeless Shelter Licensing Program in the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). We applaud the efforts to ensure the safety, dignity and rights of all individuals, including LGBTQIA+ people, experiencing homelessness in our state.

By establishing a licensing program for homeless shelters, House Bill 577 will set clear operational and building standards, guaranteeing that shelter residents are provided necessary care, support, and protection. Additionally the bill includes a vital provision that prevents discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry or national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or genetic information. This anti-discrimination provision is a critical component to ensure that marginalized community members, including LGBTQIA+ individuals, are treated with dignity and respect while accessing temporary shelter.

House Bill 577 is especially important for the Commission because it has been well documented that LGBTQIA+ communities, particularly transgender, nonbinary, and gender-diverse individuals, face disproportionate rates of homelessness.

The National Center for Transgender Equality recently released their 2022 US Trans Survey Early Insights Report which finds more than one-third (34%) of respondents were experiencing poverty and nearly one-third of respondents had experienced homelessness in their lifetime.

The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, published their LGBT People and Housing Affordability, Discrimination, and Homelessness report that reveals when compared to non-LGBT people, LGBT people have higher rates of poverty, lower rates of homeownership, and higher rates of homelessness. The report also highlights that federal, state, and local laws provide only a patchwork of protections against-LGBT discrimination in housing, lending, and social services.

True Colors United, a nonprofit that focuses on the unique experiences of LGBTQIA+ young people, produced a report, At The Intersections, that finds that LGBTQ+ youth and young adults are 120% more likely to experience homelessness than their non-LGBTQ+ peers. Furthermore, service providers estimate that 20-40% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs strongly urges a favorable report on House Bill 577. The Commission is grateful to Delegate Grossman, additional bill sponsors, and DHCD for addressing the needs of vulnerable populations and ensuring that homeless shelters uphold the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

## REFERENCES:

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