



**Maryland Commission
on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

**TESTIMONY OF JEREMY BROWNING
DIRECTOR, MARYLAND COMMISSION ON LGBTQIA+ AFFAIRS
FAVORABLE STATEMENT ON SB1107
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - HOMELESS
SHELTER LICENSING PROGRAM - ESTABLISHMENT**

March 26, 2024

House 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 the amended Senate Bill 1107 to create a Study on the establishment of 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 through comprehensive research and analysis.

By initiating a study of a licensing program for homeless shelters, Senate Bill 1107 will enable the General Assembly to make informed decisions based on a thorough understanding of the current landscape and availability of affirming homeless shelters in our state. The study will assess habitability and admission standards, recommend basic standards for homeless shelters, and propose a plan for potential licensing of such facilities.

Once the study is completed, the General Assembly can take the necessary steps to set clear operational and building standards, guaranteeing that shelter residents are provided necessary care, support, and protection. Additionally, through future legislation we can make sure shelters prevent 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.

Senate Bill 1107 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 the amended Senate Bill 1107. The Commission is grateful to Senator Mary Washington, 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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