

TRANS MARYLAND



Trans Maryland
1800 E Northern Parkway #66332
Baltimore MD 21239

House Bill #0577 Department of Housing and Community Development - Homeless Shelter Licensing Program - Establishment

Environment and Transportation Committee

February 16, 2024

Position: Support

Greetings Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and the esteemed members of the Environment and Transportation Committee. Trans Maryland is a multi-racial, multi-gender community power building organization for Maryland's trans community. Trans Maryland runs the state's largest name and gender marker change program, offering peer-to-peer guidance and financial assistance to Marylanders seeking a name and gender marker change. We also run the state's largest peer to peer connection space for Trans Marylanders. We represent thousands of transgender Marylanders who have detailed the barriers they face in accessing affirming housing, as well as those in need of emergency shelter. The overwhelming majority have no affirming options to turn to in 23 counties in Maryland, and the programs in Baltimore City are at max capacity. We urge the legislature to enact House Bill #577 to protect transgender and gender expansive people who are especially vulnerable in our shelter system.

Affirming emergency shelter is a crucial life-saving initiative for the transgender Marylanders that Trans Maryland serves. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development published a report titled "Equal Access for Transgender People: Supporting Inclusive Housing and Shelters". This report details disturbing gaps in access for transgender people as compared to our cisgender counterparts, and notes increased risk of violence and death for this population. ["One in ten transgender individuals reports being evicted based on their gender expression. \[...\] Nearly 30% of homeless transgender individuals report being turned away from a shelter due to their transgender status and 22% report experiencing sexual assault perpetrated by staff or other shelter residents."](#)

In the past year, we at Trans Maryland have seen a sharp rise in new Marylanders seeking our services, Marylanders who were fleeing the now [twenty-two states](#) that have banned at least some manner of gender affirming care. Most striking, we have seen many new transgender Marylanders from Florida, which last year banned gender affirming care, not just for youth, but also [80% of transgender adults](#) there. Our already strained systems, that often fail the trans community, will continue to be inundated with new residents that they are not equipped to serve or provide basic safety to under their roof.

As more Americans flee to become Marylanders as these attacks on transgender rights worsen in the coming years, we have an obligation to provide basic human dignity to both existing and new transgender Marylanders. Maryland needs to enact House Bill #577, a common sense bill to ensure transgender Marylanders have the same level of access to emergency shelter and

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respectful treatment as our transgender counterparts in the shelter system, and thus fulfill Governor Moore's direction to "leave no one behind". It is time for the law to be crystal clear for transgender Marylanders and ensure Maryland's shelters offer a safe space for us.

For these reasons, **we urge a favorable report on this Bill # HB 577.**

For more information, contact Lee Blinder, Executive Director of Trans Maryland at lee@transmaryland.org