



## **Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

### **Challenges and Opportunities Facing LGBTQIA+ Marylanders: 2024 Policy Priorities, Recommendations and Best Practices**

This document was created by the [Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs](#) in collaboration with community members across the State to illuminate the challenges and opportunities facing the LGBTQIA+ community in Maryland. It is a toolkit for LGBTQIA+ inclusion for State and local organizations and stakeholders, with a focus on intersectional LGBTQIA+ lived experiences. There is a lack of local, accessible data on these issues, indicating an urgent need for data across all of the mentioned issue areas listed below. This is an evolving document; the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs will continue to add information, evidence-based data, and resources. Please send your feedback to Director Jeremy Browning, [jeremy.browning@maryland.gov](mailto:jeremy.browning@maryland.gov).

### **2024 Policy Priorities**

#### **Funding and Resource Allocation:**

- Create an LGBTQIA+ Fund within the State budget:
  - Support grassroots organizations serving LGBTQIA+ communities across the State by building capacity and helping them to become more effective and sustainable
  - Address the specific challenges and disparities experienced by LGBTQIA+ individuals, such as discrimination and access to affirming housing, healthcare, mental health, education, employment, safe spaces, etc
  - Use data on economic disparities and challenges within LGBTQIA+ communities to justify the need for targeted funding
  - Create a transparent and inclusive grant allocation process so grassroots organizations can apply for funding through a simple and accessible application process
  - Priority areas to include:
    - Anti-discrimination
    - Bereavement support
    - Cultural humility and competency training

- Education
- Elder services
- Employment
- Healthcare access
- HIV PrEP access
- Housing
- Mental health
- Youth services

## **Bills 2024:**

- [Birth Certificate Modernization Act \(2023 Bill # HB 361\)](#)
  - [Office of the Attorney General - Correctional Ombudsman \(2023 Bill # HB 64\)](#)
  - [HIV Decrim \(2023 Bill # HB 287\)](#)
  - [Commission on History Culture & Civics HB 890](#)
  - Gender-Affirming Care Shielding (codifying Governor Moore's [Executive Order](#))
  - Bill to prevent book banning in schools
  - Maryland Supreme Court Ruling re: employment protections for sexual orientation
  - Combat all anti-LGBTQIA+ bills and policy proposals
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## **Assessing the Challenges Facing Our LGBTQIA+ communities and Recommendations and Best Practices for Inclusion**

### **Access to LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Services**

- Provide supportive and affirming services and resources, particularly in the areas of healthcare, housing, employment, and education, in rural areas, where the need is dire
- Promote LGBTQIA+ cultural humility and competency training for all licensed professionals and service providers
- Build partnerships with organizations and agencies that provide harm reduction services in response to issues related to social determinants of health
- Increase access to affirming resources and services for housing, healthcare, employment, education, environment, transportation and food access
- DATA NEEDS: A comprehensive Statewide community needs assessment with funding and resources to support a robust sample size should be conducted to fully understand access or lack thereof to LGBTQIA+ inclusive services

## Aging

- Create a plan to address LGBTQIA+ homelessness and lack of access to affirming resources for aging and elder populations
  - Work and collaborate with the Department of Aging and the Department of Housing to ensure that LGBTQIA+ elders are supported
  - Examples of affirming housing for elders:
    - [Stonewall House - Brooklyn, NY](#)
    - [Maryland Safe Haven - Senior Housing](#)
- [LGBTQIA+ elders face elevated risk of being forced into isolation, hostile living environments, or even homelessness. - HUD](#)
  - Long-term care in the U.S. is typically provided by family members, but LGBT elders are twice as likely to be single and three to four times more likely to be without children than their heterosexual counterparts ([Improving the Lives of LGBT Older Adults](#))
  - Medicaid and long-term care provisions, including spousal impoverishment protections, do not apply to same-sex couples, a reality that threatens their financial well-being
  - In most places, LGBT elders can be denied housing, including retirement and other long-term care housing settings, based on their sexual orientation and gender identity
  - [SAGE - Long-Term Care Equality Index \(LEI\)](#)
- “LGBT[QIA+] Elders are twice as likely to be single and live alone; four times less likely to have children [who often serve as caregivers for their aging parents/guardians], and more likely to face poverty and homelessness; and to have poor physical and mental health.”
  - [SAGE - Facts on LGBT Aging](#)
- [Discrepancies in experiences and resources for transgender elders compared to their cisgender counterparts](#)
  - Infrastructure for aging transgender folks is non-existent: Factors include losing a generation to HIV and anti-trans societal bias
  - Transgender elders who were encouraged to live “stealth” aren’t able to access newer more affirming resources
  - Need to track outcomes for Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy (GAHT) across lifespans, particularly for elders
  - [Medicare lack of coverage and access locally due to denials by the local Medicare Administrative Contractor \(MAC\) - Issue brief by Trans Maryland](#)
  - [SAGE - Resource Center](#)
- Prioritize access to independent living vs institutionalization in assisted living or nursing homes for disabled LGBTQIA+ persons
- Increase access to services for [incarcerated elder LGBTQIA+ persons](#) (this population faces an increased risk of violence, less access to preventative healthcare, access to gender affirming clothing, and hormonal and surgical transition)

- LGBTQIA+ caregiving (including queer and trans children caring for a cisgender and or heterosexual parent or loved one, and chosen family and friends caring for their peers)
  - Training for providers and staff at care facilities to ensure respect and recognition of diverse families and identities
- DATA NEEDS:
  - How many nursing homes around the State are caring for transgender community members?
  - Data on the number of LGBTQIA+ elders in need of services

## Athletics

- Support the position of major medical institutions and leading athletic organizations on transgender and intersex women and girls' inclusion in sports
  - [AMA opposes gender-based medical treatments to alter athletic ability](#)
  - [NCWGE Supports Transgender and Nonbinary Students' Full and Equal Participation in All Education Programs and Activities](#)
  - [Scientific American - Trans Girls Belong On Girls Sports Teams](#)
- Reference the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs' [Recommendations to Support LGBTQIA+ Students](#)
- Racial justice and intersex justice - Targeting of Black women's inclusion
  - From Lee Blinder of [Trans Maryland](#)'s testimony to the Maryland General Assembly in Spring 2023: "Eugenics is the framework that propagates the creation of sports bans that seek to criminalize the involvement of transgender and intersex girls in sports. The reality is that trans and intersex people have always existed in cultures all over the world. The intent to define girl and womanhood through exclusion is done like all efforts to define girl and womanhood: through racialized gender policing of Black and Brown women out of womanhood. Such efforts not only target young trans girls, but specifically Black and Brown trans and intersex girls."
- Data and benefits of inclusion in sports:
  - [Transgender People and Athletics Feb 2021 \(1\)](#)
  - [The Importance of Sports Participation for Transgender Youth](#)
  - Maryland protects transgender students against discrimination based on gender identity. Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) has a [policy](#) which states "each school system should develop and apply criteria for students to participate on interscholastic athletic teams consistent with their bona fide gender identity." Also: "To ensure competitive fairness and equal opportunities to participate without discrimination, local criteria for transgender persons should reflect the following:
    - A. Transgender students can participate on the interscholastic athletics team of the student's birth gender.

- B. Transgender students can participate on interscholastic athletics teams of the gender that the student has transitioned to. This may be supported by medical documentation (hormonal therapy, sexual reassignment surgery, counseling, etc.) confirming transition of gender.
- C. Transgender students may compete on the interscholastic team of the gender the student identifies with, as recognized by the local school system and established in official school system records. (This may differ from the student's gender listed in school system records).

## Bereavement

- Provide support for funerals of transgender community members
  - Secure funding to cover funeral costs when a transgender community member is murdered if they and their family (legal or chosen family) cannot cover the costs
  - Engage faith leaders to liaise between families and community towards the goal of the deceased person's being respected in death
  - Engage advocates to avoid deceased peoples' being misgendered/dead-named in death and to respond using cultural humility with grieving family members and houses of worship who may not recognize their loved ones' transgender identity
  - Support for advance directives and living wills for LGBTQIA+ people
    - Ensure creation of and access to advance directives and living wills by those who are precariously housed or unhoused, or who lack accessible identity document storage
- Enact steps by the State to improve the rights for a deceased transgender individual to be respected by familial, legal, and State entities after their death
  - Memorialize the individual's pronouns with the State of Maryland
    - An individual would determine their pronouns to be used on official government documents post-mortem
  - Train medical examiners on SOGISC (sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual characteristics) with a focus on gender identity so their reports and findings will be based on identity instead of body parts
  - Advocate for required LGBTQIA+ competency training for board certified chaplains (chaplains complete the first part of the death certificate when someone dies)
- DATA NEEDS:
  - Data reflecting impact of misgendering and dead-naming
  - What State support is there for LGBTQIA+ victims and families for burial?

## Data

- Population estimates:
  - [Movement Advancement Project - Maryland LGBTQ Snapshot](#)
  - [GALLUP LGBT Identification](#)
  - [PEW Research data - 5 key findings about LGBTQ Americans](#)
  - [PEW Research data](#) - 5% of young adults say their gender is different from their sex assigned at birth
  - [We Can Do More to Support Maryland's 500,000+ LGBTQ+ Residents](#) from the Maryland Center for Economic Policy
- National Challenges and trends
  - [HRC declares a state of emergency for LGBTQIA+ Americans](#)
  - [Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum \(APIAHF\) Report](#) finds there is a lack of funding to meet unmet needs of intersectional LGBTQIA+ and people within the broader Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander minority communities.
  - [PEW Gen Z trends](#)
  - [The Hill - Gen Z is 'extremely concerned: about LGBTQ+ Rights](#)
- Statewide and Local Maryland Data
  - [Moore-Miller Transition Report 2023](#)
  - [Salisbury PFLAG LGBTQIA+ Needs Assessment 2023](#)
  - [Montgomery County LGBTQIA+ Survey Report 2023](#)
  - [HRC Maryland 2022 Scorecard](#)
  - [2015 USTS Maryland Breakout Report](#)
  - [CDC - BRFSS](#)
    - [Maryland Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#)
  - State agency reports:
    - [2022 Maryland EEO Report](#)
    - [2022 Maryland State Police Hate/Bias Report](#)
    - [MCCR 2022 Report](#)
- Transgender Specific Data
  - Data about transgender people is frequently uncollected by agencies and organizations leading to [significant data gaps](#).
  - [US Trans Survey 2015 - Maryland report](#) - Anticipating updated [2022 US Trans Survey](#) initial reports in Dec 2023
  - Maryland Trans Survey - anticipated report 2024/early 2025
  - [Baltimore Metro Trans Needs Assessment 2018](#)
  - [STROBE study focused on trans women of color in 2018 in Baltimore and DC](#)
- DATA NEEDS:
  - How much is budgeted by the State of Maryland for LGBTQIA+ issues/programs?
  - Lack of data on disabled LGBTQIA+ people
  - SOGISC (sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual characteristics) data collection: Need for more comprehensive SOGISC data collection to better understand the needs and challenges of LGBTQIA+ communities

- [White House SOGISC \(sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual characteristics\) data collection recommendations](#)
- At least six states have enacted laws or signed executive orders to improve SOGI data collection:
  - Expand SOGI data collection for public health and healthcare purposes (e.g., [California](#), [Oregon](#), [Vermont](#), [Colorado](#))
  - Expand SOGI data collection beyond health settings (e.g., [Illinois](#) and [New Mexico](#))

## Disability

- [Overall, 39% of \[USTS\] respondents indicated that they had one or more disability as described in the ACS \(American Community Survey\), compared to 15% of the general population.](#) - 2015 US Trans Survey (USTS)
- [Transgender Law Center launches a survey for disabled and deaf trans people](#)
- Autistic Self-Advocacy Network, The LGBTQ Task Force, and National Center for Transgender Equality release a [statement](#) on the needs of transgender and gender non-conforming autistic people.
- [Autistic Women and Nonbinary Network - Tips and Advice for Autistic Trans People Before Finding and Going to Doctors](#)
- Developmentally disabled LGBTQIA+ people may not have access to affirming caregivers
  - Implement and require SOGISC training for all professional caregivers and service providers for developmentally disabled LGBTQIA+ people
- Implement language justice (American Sign Language, captions, web, Limited English Proficiency, and English as Second Language accessibility) across agencies; and work with organizations towards establishing these measures as best practices
  - Source grants and other mechanisms for grassroots community-led organizations to have access to language justice guidance and tools
- Inclusive policies and best practices:
  - [Disability Justice as an Audit Tool](#)
- DATA NEEDS:
  - Disability has not been listed for data collection on the Census
  - General lack of data on disabled LGBTQIA+ people

## Discrimination and Hate Crimes

- LGBTQIA+ individuals, especially those from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds are at higher risk of experiencing hate/bias incidents based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- Transgender people are over four times more likely than cisgender people to be victims of violent crime:
  - <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/press/ncvs-trans-press-release/>

- Highly and address the fact that disabled people are at higher risk of hate crimes and hate bias incidents and they face challenges in reporting
- Acknowledge that under-reporting of hate/bias incidents and negative encounters when reporting incidents is due to lack of training by individuals with lived experience at the receiving entities and agencies.
- Prioritize access to resources that support individuals and communities after incidents of discrimination/hate crimes
  - Financial resources
  - Peer to peer resources for support
  - Mental health resources
- Update forms for reporting bias incidents (and for background checks) to the FBI. Current forms use extraordinarily outdated language for the transgender and gender expansive community.
- State agency reports:
  - [2022 Maryland EEO Report](#)
  - [2022 Maryland State Police Hate/Bias Report](#)
  - [MCCR 2022 Report](#)
- DATA NEEDS:
  - Data on scope of underreporting of hate/bias incidents

## Employment and Economic Stability

- Address the increased risks of discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people in employment through workforce development and outreach to impacted LGBTQIA+ community
- Address the increased risks of discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people in employment through training and outreach to the business community
  - Partner with community-led initiatives and organizations who have direct connections to community members who lack access to traditional employment pathways
- Prioritize workforce development initiatives for transgender community members by collaborating with local and national trans-led organizations, and modeling existing initiatives
  - Data on economic instability: [2015 USTS Maryland Breakout Report](#)
  - Transgender and queer-led businesses need greater representation in minority business initiatives, along with mentorship and access to resources, particularly for those who are also Black, Brown, Indigenous, and/or disabled
    - See [HB650 Imari's Business Pride Act 2021](#) which would add certain sexual and gender minorities to minority business enterprises
  - [Trans Economic Empowerment Initiative](#) (TEEI) which was funded by government dollars in California to assist in job readiness and training
  - [TEP - Trans Employment Program](#): based at the San Francisco LGBT Center



- [Hire Trans](#) - initiative to encourage businesses to adopt inclusive hiring practices
  - [Transgender Business District - 6 core tenants](#)
- Pilot Universal Basic Income (UBI) as a pathway for low income LGBTQIA+ Marylanders to stability in housing, reduced food insecurity, and improved employment access . Rolling out UBI has been correlated with reductions in crime and, for those who are unable to access traditional employment pathways due to structural biases, reductions in the need to engage in survival sex work. Some jurisdictions such as [Montgomery County](#), [Prince George's County](#), and [Baltimore City](#) in Maryland have done so, funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) or foundation-based philanthropic dollars with matching funds in public/private partnerships.
  - [Black Trans Women Are Being Killed. Could Paying Them Help Stop This?](#) - This article centers [Ashanti Carmon](#) - a Black trans woman and Marylander who was killed due to anti-trans violence in Fairmount Heights in 2019.
- Provide and expand employment opportunities for disabled individuals residing in independent living settings
- Close the gap in Maryland's employment protection laws that does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. [Maryland Court case](#) - Maryland's highest court has ruled that the State's employment protection laws do not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. The Supreme Court of Maryland ruled that the Maryland Equal Pay for Equal Work Act does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and that the Maryland Fair Employment Practices Act permits religious organizations to discriminate "with respect to the employment of individuals of a particular religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity to perform work connected with the activities of the religious entity."
- Advocate for updates to the forms used in FBI background checks for employment or other verification purposes. The forms use extremely outdated language in regards to gender identity.
- [Abolish at-will employment on the state level](#) -
  - Alternative is Just Cause Employment which requires employers to note a specific work related cause for termination of employment
  - At-will employment disproportionately impacts black, indigenous, or other people of color (BIPOC) who are also LGBTQIA+
- DATA NEEDS:
  - Data on employment discrimination and unemployment in Maryland's LGBTQIA+ community
  - Data on employment discrimination and unemployment in Maryland's trans community

## Family Protections

- Pass the Gender Affirming Care Shielding Bill to strengthen and codify Governor Moore's [Executive Order](#)

- Ensure protections for LGBTQIA+ families, including partnerships who are polyamorous and consist of more than two persons
  - Example: [Somerville’s legal protections for non-traditional families](#) - “family or relationship structure” is a protected class (like race, gender or sexual orientation)
  - [Polyamory Legal Advocacy Coalition](#) (PLAC) - “PLAC seeks to advance the civil and human rights of polyamorous individuals, communities, and families through legislative advocacy, public policy, and public education. These rights include the legal recognition of diverse relationship structures, such as multi-partner/multi-parent families, diverse family structures, and relationships involving consensual non-monogamy, and the end of discrimination based on relationship status.”
- Reduce financial barriers to second parent adoptions for LGBTQIA+ families
- Address religious exemptions for LGBTQIA+ identity regarding adoption and custody
- Address lack of access to transition-related care for families with trans youth who are living in rural areas
  - Provide funding to train affirming providers to expand access to transition-related care
- Address marriage equity gaps for disabled LGBTQIA+ people who are at risk of losing their disability benefits if they get married.
  - Universal Basic Income could fill this gap (see the **Employment and Economic Stability** section above)
- Ensure developmentally disabled LGBTQIA+ people are not denied access to accurate and affirming sex education, a denial of their human rights
- Disallow considering disability status as the criteria for removal of children. We must protect the right to parenting for disabled parents. ([National Council on Disability](#) and [Rocking the Cradle: Ensuring the Rights of Parents with Disabilities and Their Children](#))
- Expand telehealth access for families with transgender children
- DATA NEEDS: Data demonstrating the need for better LGBTQIA+ family protections and accessible, affirming resources and support services

## Food Security

- Increase food security access/eligibility/benefits for LGBTQIA+ people
  - Ensure forms and processes for enrollment in benefits are inclusive of gender identity, and all family structures
  - Remove the exclusion of ready-to-eat/hot meals from food stamps (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)). This is a barrier for disabled people who cannot prepare their own meals and are also low income.
  - Ensure outreach and process are language-inclusive
  - Benefits to partnering with Community Supported Agriculture groups ([CSAs](#)), and farmer’s markets across the State, focusing by region

- Promote and fund Community Land Trusts - with an emphasis on training, access to employment and cooperative ownership for LGBTQIA+ folks, with emphasis on BIPOC folks in farming, land stewardship, etc. to enhance food sovereignty
  - Example: [Future Harvest](#)
- DATA NEEDS: Data on food insecurities for our LGBTQIA+ communities

## Funding and Resource Allocation

- There is historic underinvestment in LGBTQIA+ communities
- Members of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs are volunteers, not compensated for their efforts as they work to address challenges facing LGBTQIA+ communities. Commissioners with valuable lived experience are negatively impacted by the very same systems they are working to improve, a significant barrier to their participation
  - Stipends for Commissioners - In 2022, through [SB5793](#), Washington State offers stipends to increase intersectional representation from those with lived experience
- DATA NEEDS:
  - Data on investment from the State: How much does the State invest annually that specifically supports LGBTQIA+ Marylanders?
  - Do other states have an LGBTQIA+ fund?
  - International Example - [Global Equity Fund](#)

## Harm Reduction & Substance Use Programs

- Ensure training for staff and providers who provide substance use and harm reduction services
- Ensure access for transgender communities to affirming harm reduction services by involving the transgender community in the provision and planning of services
  - [Towards Trans-Inclusive and Trans-Centered Harm Reduction Services](#)
  - Ensure all Maryland counties have and use the Maryland Department of Health's syringe services program funds to stock supplies for transition related hormone therapy, to train affirming nursing staff for wound care, and to connect to local trans support groups and Pride Centers for distribution support and collaboration
- Provide options for trans inclusion (including for nonbinary transgender people) with regards to gendered beds in recovery spaces, and/or gendered recovery homes.
- Include substance use disorder as part of the State definition of disability discrimination
- Health Departments in all 24 counties should provide Narcan to community organizations serving LGBTQIA+ communities, who are at higher risk of overdose
- Ensure Narcan prescriptions are available over the counter (OTC) at pharmacies

- DATA NEEDS: Data on substance abuse in LGBTQIA+ communities and lack of affirming programs

## Healthcare (and Mental Healthcare)

- Ensure access to transition-related care in each county in Maryland
  - [Not yet a sanctuary: Advocates say Montgomery County is a trans health care desert](#)
  - [AMA - Clarification of Medical Necessity for Treatment of Gender Dysphoria H-185.927](#)
  - [AMA medical necessity statement for transgender children](#)
  - [AAP - Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Transgender and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents](#)
  - [APA - Position Statement on Access to Care for Transgender and Gender Diverse Individuals](#)
- Prohibit transgender health exclusions in private health plans sold in the State
  - [AMA policy - removing financial barriers to Care for Transgender Patients H-185.950](#)
  - [AMA Statement on health insurance coverage for gender affirming care of transgender patients](#)
- Ensure all Maryland counties have no exemptions for transgender healthcare in their employee healthcare plans
- Provide access to LGBTQIA+ knowledgeable and affirming providers across the health and wellness spectrum
- Medicare Gap - Address the exclusions in the regional Medicare Administrative Contractors (MAC) coverage of transition-related surgical care
  - [Medicare Coverage of Gender-Affirming Surgery - Issue brief for Trans Maryland](#)
- Acknowledge LGBTQIA+ people have an increased risk of mental health challenges: depression, suicidal ideation and lack of accessible and affirming care due to bias. Address via training by those with lived experience.
- LGBTQIA+ undocumented immigrants lack access to affirming healthcare because they are not eligible to participate in the Maryland Health Benefits Exchange ([Access to Care Act HB 588](#) in 2023, stalled in the Maryland General Assembly)
- Improve access to HIV prevention and remedy the lack of equitable access to and coverage of PrEP and PEP and its related services, specifically for Black, Latine and communities of color, and low income communities who cannot afford it:
  - Improve access among people who identify as trans
  - Improve media coverage for PrEP as an option for all, rather than exclusively targeting cisgender men
  - Expand provider knowledge
- Provide access to safer and newer HIV prevention medication for everyone. Descovy was not tested on people who were assigned female at birth (see the [story of Lou Sullivan](#)).

- Identify and overcome barriers in rural areas to access affirming healthcare services, particularly for transition related care, but also PrEP and PEP, affirming birth services for pregnant LGBTQIA+ people and families, etc.
- Ensure the provisions in Trans Health Equity Act are incorporated in subsidized insurance plans available through the Maryland Health Exchange
- Murders of Black and Indigenous transgender women is a public health emergency, and must be addressed
- Require LGBTQ+ competency continuing education credit (<https://code.dccouncil.gov/us/dc/council/laws/21-95>)
- Address and further research the impacts of social determinants of health such as Race, Disability, Immigration Status, Language access
- Implement alternative methods to expand healthcare and mental healthcare access across populations not traditionally reached by medical systems such as:
  - [CAHOOTS](#) - Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (example from Oregon)
  - [Ujima Medics](#) - training street medics for responses to healthcare or mental health situations (see 1st responder biases with EMS/medics)
  - [Queer Crisis Response](#) - a network of neighbors, allies and service providers committed to supporting queer and trans people in crisis
  - [Harriet's Wildest Dreams](#) - DC Harm Reduction and Rapid Response Team mobilizes as an alternative to calling the police
- Update [Maryland's Conversion Therapy ban](#) to include adults under guardianship
  - DC outlawed conversion therapy for adults under guardianship [see bill here](#)
- Abortion access and reproductive rights should not be limited on the basis of intellectual abilities

## HIV Prevention and Treatment Access

- Implement PrEP and PEP access for adolescents and adults
- Remove barriers to PREP prescribed to adolescents without a parental consent
  - Similar to the Family Protection Act
  - Access to meds without showing up on parents insurance
- Fund and remove access barriers that exist to address the high cost of accessing medications. This is prohibitive for disabled and low to medium-income community members to access these medications
- Cost of laboratory services is prohibitive
  - We lack universal International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) billing codes for insurance. Not all carriers accept the same codes, and Medicare allows only once a year testing (HIV and STIs) which is a personal and public health liability for the LGBTQIA+ community
- Cost of office visits for preventative services is a barrier for the LGBTQIA+ community
- PrEP coverage (i.e. PrEP prescribed among who need it) is 25% in Maryland (15% in high HIV incidence areas such as Baltimore City)
- Increasing provider knowledge and acceptance of PrEP will support prevention

- Require continuing education (CE) on PrEP, PEP and sexual health
- The Biden Administration has ordered insurance companies to cover all costs associated with PrEP (2021), but not all of them have complied:
  - See [FAQS About Affordable CAre Act Implementation Part 47](#) and;
  - news coverage - [Biden Administration orders insurance companies to cover all costs associated with PrEP](#)
- [PrEP Access and Coverage Act: 117th Congress: H.R. 6117; S. 3295 \(2021\) introduced](#) -
- [SB64](#) HIV Prevention Bill in Maryland has not been successful despite multiple attempts
- Recently, Sen. Tina Smith and Rep. Adam Schiff introduced [legislation \(S. 2188/H.R. 4932\)](#) which would require all payers to cover all PrEP drugs without cost-sharing immediately after FDA approval
- The lack of media portrayal of PrEP as an option for ALL genders affects acceptance and stigmatizes one group of people
- In terms of HIV treatment, viral suppression rates for Maryland are low at 62%; Social Determinants of Health (SSDOH) plays a role in access. Current data in Maryland shows that 91% of people who have HIV know their HIV status, but only 88% who are diagnosed are linked to care. More robust education efforts are needed
- In terms of HIV treatment access, a Prescription Drug Affordability Board (PDAB) (<https://pdab.maryland.gov/>) (like Colorado) is being formed in the State of Maryland and will be working to lower HIV drug costs. We are concerned that their planned approach of capping the price of individual drugs will create unintended consequences and new challenges for patients and entities who dispense medications
  - Several national HIV organizations are closely following the PDABs being set up in States and speaking up on behalf of patients. [Community Access National Network \(CANN\)](#) is one of those organizations

## Housing & Homelessness

- Emergency shelters with wrap-around services must serve youth, elders, adults who currently age out after 24 years old, or are not covered by youth initiatives.
- Create Trans Care Navigator positions in all housing agencies who will coordinate training and implementation of agency LGBTQIA+ community strategy
- Require all agencies and organizations who provide emergency shelter or long-term housing support to undergo LGBTQIA+ affirming cultural humility training
- Require LGBTQIA+ affirming training for providers who serve unhoused youth (LGBTQIA+ youth are disproportionately represented in this demographic)
- LGBTQIA+ Housing discrimination
  - Create resources and remedies for LGBTQIA+ individuals and families who experience discrimination
- Provide training and access to resources for LGBTQIA+ people on how to become homeowners

- Empower LGBTQIA+ people with the knowledge, resources and tools to find housing
- Use community land trusts as a model for empowering community members to achieve long term financial and housing security
- Affirming regional housing support services are needed in all areas of the State
- Implement Statewide tenant protections
  - Rent stabilization
  - Tenant Bill of Rights
- Data - [True Colors United](#):
  - [Youth State Index: Maryland](#)
  - [At The Intersections](#)

## ID Documents

- Pass the [Birth Certificate Modernization Act \(2023 Bill # HB 361\)](#)
- Streamline the fee waiver process through the Maryland Judiciary. The fee waiver process in Maryland is one of the most complicated in the country. Court fees are a barrier to access ([JOTF's Fines and Fees Fact Sheet](#)). Most people who are pursuing a name change in Maryland do so on their own, without attorney representation.
- Remove/reduce the cost barrier for filing a name change in Maryland through the Maryland Judiciary (Trans Maryland currently fundraises to cover the filing costs for transgender individuals who face long wait times and backlogs through Maryland's legal aid organizations).
- Ensure all agencies and entities involved in name changes have a clear, streamlined "how-to" process that reduces costs and logistical barriers wherever possible. This process should be explained in plain language, in accessible form, and be posted on the agency/entity's website. [Providing access to name changes, particularly for transgender women of color as a means towards mitigating adverse social determinants of health](#)

## Immigration

- [From 2003 to 2017 the number of LGBTQIA+ asylum cases has tripled](#)
- [Nearly 1 third of LGBTQIA+ immigrants are undocumented, and thus lack access to resources that serve the documented immigrant community, and the LGBTQIA+ community more broadly.](#)
- Ensure housing and protections for LGBTQIA+ immigrants seeking sanctuary in the United States based on their SOGISC status
- Ensure housing and protections for transgender immigrants who are particularly vulnerable when interacting with systems and agencies
  - ["A center for trans women where they help you": Resource needs of the immigrant Latinx transgender community](#)
- Stop immigration enforcement by State agencies



- Ensure all organizations and agencies serving immigrant populations have SOGISC training
- Empower and focus resources towards organizations led by and centered around LGBTQIA+ immigrants and detainees
  - [The Queer Detainee Empowerment Project \(QDEP\)](#) assists folks coming out of immigration detention in securing structural, health/wellness, educational, legal, and emotional support and services. We work to organize around the structural barriers and state violence that LGBTQIA TS & GNC detainee/undocumented folks face related to their immigration status, race, sexuality, and gender expression/ identity.
  - [Trans Latinx DMV](#) - (a chapter of TransLatin@ Coalition) is a Two-Spirit Trans Womxn led organization that centers the needs of Black & Indigenous Trans-Latinx people living in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia.
- Institute language justice and accessibility for LGBTQIA+ immigrants in State agencies
- Provide access to disability services regardless of immigration status
- DATA NEEDS: Data on challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ immigrants

## Interpersonal Violence

- Ensure programs that address interpersonal violence in relationships or community are trained in LGBTQIA+ cultural humility and consider incarceration as a last resort
  - Assumptions of cis-heteronormativity by service providers and agencies exacerbates survivors' lack of access to affirming resources
  - See information from [FORGE](#)
- Expand and enhance resources for survivors of interpersonal violence to make it easier to leave a violent relationship. Lack of access to safe housing and shelter should not govern the survivor's decision. Expand resources dedicated to addressing issues faced by disabled LGBTQIA+ people such as:
  - Provide domestic and intimate partner violence resources to address abuse by caregivers and caretakers
  - Create and promote resources for caregiver abuse/neglect for disabled people
  - Ensure violence and victims resources are accessible for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities
  - Exercise greater oversight for guardians and caretakers of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and physical disabilities
- DATA NEEDS: Data on barriers faced by LGBTQIA+ survivors



## Intersectionality

- Individuals can experience multiple forms of discrimination simultaneously such as discrimination on the basis of gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, disability, religious affiliation, socioeconomic status, etc.
- There is a compounded impact of discrimination and harassment experienced by LGBTQIA+ individuals who belong to multiple marginalized groups. They are affected by layers of racism, transphobia, homophobia, ageism, sexism, ableism, etc.
- DATA NEEDS: Several national reports show the compounded impact and challenges of multiple marginalized identities, but additional State and local data is needed

## Judicial System & Corrections

- Pass [Office of the Attorney General - Correctional Ombudsman \(2023 Bill # HB 64\)](#)
- End long term solitary confinement as a protective or punitive measure
  - Explore a PODs based system for LGBTQIA+ community members who are currently incarcerated
- Ensure name and or gender marker changes are respected during jury selection and provide training and implement rules to disallow discrimination based on SOGISC in jury selection
- Ban use of someone's LGBTQIA+ identity or reproductive decisions as a reason to establish guardianship status
- Ensure once a person is under guardianship, the person must not be deprived of access to gender affirming care, LGBTQIA+ identity or expression, or reproductive decisions
- Increase guardianship oversight and protections for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This requires data and tracking of the number of people under guardianship.
- Promote assisted decision making as an alternative to guardianship. Establish guardianship as a last resort.
- Provide alternatives to criminal processes that don't hinge on insanity pleas, such as counseling or restorative justice processes
- Washington State Department of Corrections:
  - [DOC and Disability Rights Washington Agree to Changes to Treatment of Transgender Incarcerated Individuals - 10.11.2023](#) - includes links to updated policies
  - [Them article - Washington State Prisons are no required to provide inmates with Gender-affirming care](#)
- DATA NEEDS:
  - Add data and tracking on number of people under guardianship
  - Implement SOGISC incarcerated population and employment data collection in all correctional and jail facilities in Maryland.

## Lack of LGBTQIA+ cultural humility and competency

- Require all professionals receive at least six (6) hours of live, annual professional development training about the needs and experiences of LGBTQIA+ people and families. Training should be delivered by facilitators with extensive personal and professional experience with educating about gender, sexuality and identity.
  - Precedent: law in DC requires two hours of LGBTQ core competency training  
<https://code.dccouncil.gov/us/dc/council/laws/21-95>
- Mandate that LGBTQIA+ medical training occurs in all curriculums, to include MD, DO, PA, NP, RN, and mental health providers. Mandatory training must be part of Board testing. Offer incentives for these programs towards the goal of diversifying their students.

## Law Enforcement and First Responders

- Mandate LGBTQIA+ cultural humility training for law enforcement and first responders, but with a transgender specific focus
- Create a LGBTQIA+ Taskforce and/or a Liaison - they would receive data about arrests and police engaged moments, and can dispense that data and information to State and local stakeholders:
  - See more information from [HRC MEI Standards of Credit for LGBTQ+ Liaison or Task Force](#):
  - **LGBTQ+ Police Liaison or Task Force (10 points).** To get credit in this category, the city must have an officially designated liaison within the police department to the LGBTQ[IA]+ community (or a police task force charged with addressing LGBTQ[IA]+ issues) whose designation as LGBTQ+ liaison and contact information is posted on the police department's website. An LGBTQ[IA]+ police liaison serves as an accessible and friendly ear to the city's LGBTQ[IA+] community and elevates LGBTQ[IA+]-related concerns to the police chief and other city officials. LGBTQ[IA+] police officers, including high-ranking officers, do not qualify for credit in this category unless their service as liaison is part of their official job and the required information is published online. Partial credit will be awarded if the entire police force was recently trained on LGBTQ+ issues.
  - **Required Documentation:** A link to the police department website displaying the LGBTQIA+ police liaison's title and contact information.
  - **Reported 2020 Hate Crimes Statistics to the FBI (12 points).** To qualify for points in this section, the city must report hate crimes statistics to the FBI in all categories, including sexual orientation and gender identity, and either: Report a positive number of hate crimes in any category in 2020 (i.e., report more than "0" for hate crimes reported in any one or more of the protected categories), OR report zero hate crimes in 2020 AND have reported a positive number of hate crimes in any one or more of the protected categories some year in the past five years of published

reports. This second prong is to recognize that while statistically, it is possible that no hate crimes of any kind occurred in a small city in one year, it is highly improbable that no hate crimes of any kind occurred in a city in the past five years of published FBI hate crimes reports.

- Recommend a case review process before police action, such as before removing someone from a home. Send social workers or mental health workers before the police (see the **Harm Reduction and Substance Abuse Programs** section for more information).
- Convene conversations about alternatives - [Durham Beyond Policing](#) (2018-now) has enabled a crisis response program through police vacancies. The program is funded through the [city](#) via a participatory budgeting process.
- See data from the [2022 Maryland State Police Hate/Bias Report](#)
- DATA NEEDS: Require data collection around arrests and police engaged incidents, and provide transparency about that information is disseminated in Maryland

## **LGBTQIA+ Organizations/ Pride Centers**

- Find ways to fund support for Pride organizations around the State to hire staff and establish a physical space to support the community
  - Pride Center will establish support groups, employ case management for emergency housing and shelter navigation, job readiness and placement, healthcare navigation to resources, syringe services programs, safer sex programming and supplies, PrEP and PEP access (including for persons who were assigned female at birth). This will include establishing funds and grants for creating disability (including intellectual and developmental disability) programming.
- Statewide:
  - Maryland Safe Haven (housing services, support services, direct services, advocacy)
  - Trans Maryland (support services, direct services, advocacy)
  - Freestate Justice (legal services, advocacy)
- Allegany County
  - Cumberland Pride Festival
  - Safe Space Cumberland (support services, direct services, advocacy)
- Anne Arundel County
  - Annapolis Pride (advocacy)
  - Annapolis Pride Festival
  - Crofton Pride Festival
  - PFLAG Annapolis and Anne Arundel County
- Baltimore City
  - Baltimore Pride Festival
  - Baltimore Black Pride Festival
  - Baltimore Trans Pride Festival
  - Hearts and Ears (LGBTQIA+ Wellness and Recovery Center)
  - Pride Center of Maryland (support services, direct services, advocacy)

- Baltimore County
  - Catonsville Pride Festival
- Calvert County
  - Calvert County Pride (support, advocacy, newly forming)
- Caroline County
  - Caroline Pride (brick and mortar space)
  - Caroline Pride Festival
- Carroll County
  - PFLAG Westminster - Carroll: Unity Center (brick and mortar space)
- Charles County Pride
  - PrEP for Pride Festival
- Dorchester County
  - DoCo Pride in December Food Parade
- Frederick County
  - The Frederick Center (Frederick County, brick and mortar space)
  - Frederick Pride Festival
- Garrett County
  - Garrett County Pride (website, advocacy)
- Harford (and Cecil) County
  - UCB Pride (support, virtual space)
  - UCB Pride Festival
- Howard County
  - PFLAG Howard County (support, advocacy)
  - Howard County Pride Festival
- Montgomery County
  - Rockville Pride Festival
  - MoCo Pride Center (support, virtual space)
  - Takoma Pride Day Festival
  - Pride in the Plaza Festival
- Prince George's County
  - Greenbelt Pride Festival
  - Laurel Pride Festival
  - Mt. Rainer Pride Festival
  - Prince George's County Pride Festival
- St. Mary's County
  - SOMD Pride (support, virtual space, advocacy)
  - SOMD Pride Festival
- Talbot County
  - Delmarva Pride (brick and mortar space)
  - Delmarva Pride Festival
- Washington County
  - Hagerstown Hopes (brick and mortar space)
  - Hagerstown Pride Festival
- Wicomico County
  - Salisbury Pride Festival
  - PFLAG Salisbury (support, advocacy)

- Worcester County
  - Ocean City Pride Parade Festival
- DATA NEEDS: Data on funding sources for these organizations:
  - How much funding from Federal, State and local governments?
  - How much from individual donors, corporate sponsors?
  - How much funding collectively from all sources?

## Racial Justice

- Close disparities in violence, wellness (health and mental healthcare)
- Focus on the public health emergency of murders of Black transgender women
- See additional sections above and below for further information and policy recommendations
- DATA NEEDS: Data on racial disparities within the LGBTQIA+ community

## Religious freedom

- Some religious institutions can legally discriminate - See [Maryland Court case](#) - Maryland's highest court has ruled that the State's employment protection laws do not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation
- Abolish anti-LGBTQIA+ policies and laws, including book and flag bans
- DATA NEEDS: What specific policies and laws are needed to ensure equal protections for LGBTQIA+ youth, adult individuals, elders, and families?

## Representation of LGBTQIA+ People in State Government

- Recommend policies that increase LGBTQIA+ representation by attracting and retaining LGBTQIA+ talent in State government
- Correct the lack of openly transgender community representation across State government
- DATA NEED: Track LGBTQIA+ representation in employment and appointment by all State agencies

## Sanctuary Policies

- Sanctuary policies have been enacted without funding to support new arrivals to Maryland seeking sanctuary from harm in their States and countries of origin.
- The need for services is much greater than existing capacity (capacity is already strained).
  - Allocate funding for provider training to increase capacity
  - Focus on expanding affordable housing options and affirming shelter and rapid rehousing services to meet current and future needs
- DATA NEEDS:
  - Number of individuals and families seeking sanctuary in Maryland

- Data to reflect the increase in currently maxed-out services (wait time increases, fewer openings for new patients, etc.)

## Sex Work

- Decriminalize sex work across Maryland
- Eliminate arrests of those engaged in sex work
- Combat societal stigma and marginalization of those engaged in sex work
  - Provide workforce development pathways for those who wish to leave sex work
- Delineate the difference between sex work by choice, by default, and sex trafficking
- Prioritize, empower, and fund peer-led initiatives and organizations led by LGBTQIA+ persons with lived experience of sex work

## Socioeconomic Inequality

- Refer to the **Employment and Economic Stability** section above for additional details and recommendations
- Address the significant economic disparities within the LGBTQIA+ community through resource allocation and funding opportunities
- Transgender individuals, people of color, and those with disabilities face higher levels of poverty
- DATA NEEDS: Data to highlight disparities in socioeconomic levels between LGBTQIA+ populations and the general population

## Transportation

- Provide access to affordable and reliable transportation for transgender people across Maryland. Currently, it is a barrier to access to resources
- Remove barriers for disabled transgender and LGBTQIA+ people posed by Access-A-Ride (use of chosen names and pronouns, timely arrival to medical and mental healthcare appointments).
- Lack of access to public transportation and/or ride shares prevent transportation in rural areas, even if funds are available to cover the cost: correct the lack of access
- Provide greater access to drivers licenses for disabled people, including an easy to read driver's education manual using plain language
- DATA NEEDS: Data on transportation barriers for LGBTQIA+ people

## Veterans

- Remove the ban on transition-related gender affirming surgical care for transgender veterans and their families

- Create and fund housing, employment, and mental health care liaisons for LGBTQIA+ veterans
- Restore veteran's benefits (and spouses benefits) denied during Don't Ask Don't Tell
- Streamline name and gender marker change processes for veterans
- Ensure combat acquired disabilities services are LGBTQIA+ inclusive
  - Parking placards, housing properties, job opportunities
- DATA NEEDS: How many LGBTQIA+ veterans reside in Maryland?

## Youth & Education

- Reference the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs' [Recommendations for Supporting LGBTQIA+ Students](#)
- Provide resources and housing for unsupported youth who have been navigating familial rejection
- Support youth fleeing violence in their country of origin
- Book and flag bans:
  - Focus on schools and public libraries
  - Disability (including developmental and intellectual disability) cannot be used to limit access to books with LGBTQIA+ content
- LGBTQIA+ Youth Commission - see [Massachusetts example](#), and recommendation from The [Moore/Miller transition report](#) (Early Education, recommendation 16) to create a LGBTQIA+ youth advisory report
- Require annual Maryland State Department of Education school climate surveys to obtain more data related to LGBTQ+ youth and add "nonbinary" to the gender options (currently, students are required to select either "male" or "female")
- Develop and install a Statewide discipline policy for schools to handle hate/based or motivated language/behavior (involving anti-LGBTQIA+ bias). Institute peer mediation/DEI training/restorative justice as a response for hate/bias incidents, rather than a carceral response. Tie into Social emotional learning (SEL) framework
- Expand Global Community Citizenship course graduation requirement in Anne Arundel County Public Schools to state-level and make the course an MD state High School graduation requirement.
- Do not exclude Sex Ed from the special education curriculum. Ensure students with disabilities, including but not limited to developmental and intellectual disabilities, receive sexual education and LGBTQIA+ education.
- Model: Universities and colleges can implement trans and LGBTQIA+ steps for inclusion on campus, and in their systems. See:
  - [Seattle University's Committee to Improve Trans Inclusion Report](#)
- Model: the JED Foundation equips America's teens and young adults with skills and support they need to grow into healthy, thriving adults. See:
  - The JED Foundation's [Proud & Thriving Framework](#).

# General Recommendations and Best Practices for All State Agencies

## 1. Inclusive Policies:

- **Non-Discrimination Policy:** Ensure that all staff and members of the public are aware of the [State of Maryland's non-discrimination laws](#) which prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry or national origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or genetic information.
- **Review and Update Policies:** Review and update internal and external policies, procedures and guidelines to ensure LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Include LGBTQIA+ staff and/or consultants, and members of the public where appropriate in every level of the review process.
- **Restrooms and Facilities:** Ensure access and appropriate signage for gender-inclusive restrooms and facilities in State-owned buildings. Individuals have the right and should be encouraged to use restrooms and facilities that align with their gender identity.
- **Gender Inclusive Language:** Ensure gender inclusive language is used throughout all internal and external communications, guides, resources, etc.
- **Inclusive Insurance:** Ensure inclusive coverage for medical and mental health care, including transition related care.

## 2. Training and Professional Development:

- **Mandatory Training:** Require at least six hours of mandatory training for new and existing State employees annually in LGBTQIA+ cultural humility and competency. The training should be provided by people with lived experience.
- **Guest Speakers:** Invite and provide transit and compensation for LGBTQIA+ activists and thought leaders to speak at State-sponsored events.

## 3. Programming and Events:

- **Recognition:** Officially recognize and celebrate important LGBTQIA+ dates like Pride Month, Transgender Day of Remembrance, etc. Reference the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ calendar of events and days of significance.
- **Inclusive Events:** Ensure State-sponsored events are inclusive, using gender-neutral language, encouraging pronoun usage on name badges, and providing spaces that are affirming to all attendees.



- **LGBTQIA+ Forum or Summit:** Host or support Statewide LGBTQIA+ forums or summits designed to educate staff and the public on challenges and opportunities to support LGBTQIA+ Marylanders.
- **Support Groups:** Foster the creation and sustenance of LGBTQIA+ support groups or ERGs (Employee Resource Groups) Statewide and within State agencies to attract and retain LGBTQIA+ staff.
  - Model: <https://lgbtq.wa.gov/rain>
  - RAIN Charter: [https://lgbtq.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-07/RAIN\\_Charter\\_2020.pdf](https://lgbtq.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-07/RAIN_Charter_2020.pdf)

#### 4. Community Engagement:

- **Outreach:** Create regularly scheduled outreach programs to address concerns specific to LGBTQIA+ communities, especially historically excluded groups such as transgender, nonbinary, people of color, and disabled LGBTQIA+ individuals.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Set up mechanisms to solicit feedback from LGBTQIA+ communities about State policies, programs, and services. Use the feedback to improve and expand accessibility and LGBTQIA+ inclusivity in State government.
- **Collaboration:** Partner with the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, local LGBTQIA+ organizations and community groups to ensure policies and programs are informed by the needs of our communities.

#### 5. External LGBTQIA+ Resources:

- **LGBTQIA+ Access Plan:** Each State agency should create an access plan in order to provide affirming and accessible resources and service to LGBTQIA+ Marylanders. State agencies should solicit feedback from LGBTQIA+ community members through surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one meetings with citizens to understand where barriers exist and how to overcome them. Include the Department of Disabilities in the assessment and creation of resources for LGBTQIA+ people with disabilities.
- **LGBTQIA+ Webpage and Resource Directory:** Each State agency should compile and maintain a public directory of LGBTQIA+ resources available related to agency services and functions. These resources could be offered by Federal, State, and/or local government agencies or nonprofit partners. All LGBTQIA+ inclusive resources and affirming staff should be easily accessible by the public via State agency websites.
- **Support Services:** Invest in and partner with external organizations that provide LGBTQIA+ inclusive and affirming services related to agency services and functions.
- **Education:** Provide resources for LGBTQIA+ individuals to learn and understand how each agency can support their needs whether it be housing, health care, employment, education, etc. Additionally, provide education to the general public on the importance of LGBTQIA+ inclusion in an effort to end discriminatory practices in the State.

- **Sanctuary Support:** Ensure agencies are providing support and are prepared for the influx of LGBTQIA+ individuals and families moving to Maryland from less affirming States.

## 6. Staffing:

- **Dedicated Staffing:** Each State agency should have funded and resourced positions to support LGBTQIA+ individuals to access services provided by the State. This would include positions such as LGBTQIA+ Director of Inclusion, Outreach Manager/Coordinator, Training and Development Specialist, Community Liaison Officer, etc.
- **Diverse Hiring:** Ensure that State agencies are recruiting and retaining staff with lived experiences that are representative of diverse LGBTQIA+ communities.

## 7. Funding:

- **Budget Allocation:** Each agency should allocate or advocate for a specified budget for LGBTQIA+ initiatives. This funding will cover staff salaries, training programs, community outreach, events, and other resources.
- **LGBTQIA+ Fund and Grants:** Establish a Statewide grant program that supports local LGBTQIA+ organizations, events, or initiatives. These grants can help grassroots movements and provide resources to marginalized LGBTQIA+ groups that don't have access to larger funding sources.

## 8. Data Collection:

- **LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Data Collection:** Include questions about sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual characteristics (SOGISC) in State surveys to better understand the challenges and needs of LGBTQIA+ communities.

## To ensure these recommendations lead to concrete changes:

- **Implementation Plan:** Develop a strategy for implementation of these recommendations and best practices for LGBTQIA+ inclusion.
- **Implementation Teams:** Assign dedicated teams or individuals in each agency who will be responsible for the implementation of these recommendations.
- **Annual Review:** Ensure each agency reviews their LGBTQIA+ inclusivity practices annually, addressing any gaps or areas of needed improvement.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** State agencies should be required to share their plans, progress, and challenges in order to provide the highest level of service for all Marylanders.

## Acknowledgements

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Special thanks to the Policy Committee members:

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The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs unanimously adopted the *Challenges and Opportunities Facing Our LGBTQIA+ Marylanders: 2024 Policy Priorities, Recommendations and Best Practices* on November 13, 2023.

Learn more about the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs at <https://goci.maryland.gov/lgbtq/>.