

# TRANS MARYLAND



Trans Maryland  
1800 E Northern Parkway #66332  
Baltimore MD 21239

## **House Bill # 1430 Education - Public Schools - Parents' Rights (Education Bill of Rights for Families Act)**

Ways & Means Committee

March 6, 2024

**Position: Oppose**

**To Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and the esteemed members of the Ways and Means Committee of the Maryland House.** Trans Maryland is a multi-racial, multi-gender community power building organization for Maryland's trans community. In that capacity we work with young LGBTQIA+ people all across the state, and their families.

We understand the importance of supporting parents. In our capacity we hear from many transgender and queer parents whose families are not provided space in our society to thrive. These parents and guardians deserve the same right to be acknowledged for who they are as cisgender and heterosexual parents. However, bills such as this one have no such goal. Bills like this are an effort to establish only a few parental experiences as valid, and pretend that families with trans and queer heads of household do not exist.

Our students must be taught about the existence of trans and queer people to prevent harm, discrimination, and violence, to learn about their fellow classmates, neighboring families, faculty, historical persons of note, and legislators in service of the betterment of our society. UNICEF states that "children are individuals, children are neither the possessions of parents nor of the state, nor are they mere people-in-the-making; they have equal status as members of the human family." UNICEF also states "Social research findings show that children's earliest experiences significantly influence their future development. The course of their development determines their contribution, or cost, to society over the course of their lives." What more costs will the queer and trans youth of Maryland bear if their government yields to those who seek to remove queer and trans youth and adults from public life? What costs will cisgender and heterosexual youth charge to our society if they are opted out of information about members of a vulnerable, marginalized group?

Parental and or guardian notification requirements can have many unintended consequences. Parents can be a safe harbor for their LGBTQIA+ young person, but sometimes unfortunately they may not have the education or information available to them to help them affirm their child. In situations like that, notification can lead to emotional or physical harm at the hands of a parent or guardian. For that reason, we must oppose mandatory parental notification, and this decision has been backed by the 4th Circuit Court in its protection of the Montgomery County Gender Identity Guidelines which affirm a student's ability to disclose LGBTQIA+ identity to a safe person at their school, and have that information remain confidential until the student themselves is ready to share. The Courts and our society have already agreed that in certain situations a parent or guardian is not a source of safety for their child, and may even be a source of harm. Because of this, we must proceed with safety at the forefront, whether that safety be emotional or physical.

For more information, contact Lee Blinder, Executive Director of Trans Maryland at [lee@transmaryland.org](mailto:lee@transmaryland.org)



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From the GLSEN 2019 National School Climate Survey, we know that Maryland schools were not safe for most LGBTQ+ secondary school students. 24% of Maryland's LGBTQ youth surveyed had experienced physical harassment, 12% had experienced physical assault, and 67% had experienced verbal harassment ([2019 National School Climate Survey, GLSEN](#)). Almost one quarter of surveyed Maryland LGBTQ youth experienced physical harassment, which is an unacceptable level of violence in our Maryland Public Schools. When we endeavor to improve the culture of violence against LGBTQIA+ people in our society by reducing those numbers, we know that education is key. Opting out of learning about the existence of this community is a pathway to continued violence, and is fundamentally out of alignment with acknowledging the inherent dignity of transgender and queer youth and families.

We are watching attacks on the freedom of access to information in jurisdictions all over the country, and legislation like this is a part of that coordinated effort. A core challenge to an informed, knowledgeable, and proactive populace is to limit information and access to education about all families.

We understand that fear of those who are different is a factor here, and efforts like these serve to drive a wedge to attempt to establish who can be reflected in the well-researched, and well-vetted literature and materials that are available to our young people. We are interested in an open society that allows for and celebrates a public school education that includes the broadly diverse communities that make up our state, so we can fulfill the goal of Governor Moore's administration to "leave no one behind".

For these reasons **we urge an unfavorable report on this Bill # HB 1430.**

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