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Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

SB0733 – Constitutional Officers – Gender–Neutral Language

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Felman, Vice Chair Kagan and Esteemed Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Ronnie L. Taylor, and I serve as the Advocacy, Policy, & Partnerships Director at FreeState Justice, a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing legal and systemic inequities affecting Maryland's LGBTQIA+ community. I am here to testify in strong support of **Senate Bill 733**, which seeks to amend the Maryland Constitution to use gender-neutral language when referring to constitutional officers.

SB0733 addresses the critical need for inclusive language in our state's foundational document. Currently, the Maryland Constitution employs gender-specific terms such as "he" when referring to constitutional officers, implicitly excluding individuals who do not identify as male. This language not only fails to represent the diversity of our state's populace but also perpetuates systemic biases against women and non-binary individuals.

The significance of this issue is underscored by the increasing representation of women in state leadership roles. As of February 2025, a record 13 women are serving as governors across the United States. However, many state constitutions, including Maryland's, continue to presume officeholders will be male, as highlighted by recent analyses. This discrepancy between our constitutional language and the reality of our leadership undermines the principles of equality and inclusiveness.

Senate Bill 587 proposes to amend the Maryland Constitution by replacing gender-specific terms with gender-neutral language when referring to constitutional officers. This change is not merely symbolic; it has tangible benefits:

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1. **Promoting Inclusivity:** By adopting gender-neutral language, Maryland affirms its commitment to representing all citizens, regardless of gender identity. This aligns with broader efforts to ensure that legal documents and governmental practices are inclusive of all individuals.
2. **Reflecting Current Realities:** The amendment acknowledges and validates the presence and contributions of women and non-binary individuals in governmental roles, ensuring that our constitution accurately reflects the diversity of our leadership.
3. **Setting a Precedent:** Enacting this change positions Maryland as a leader in promoting gender equity, potentially inspiring other states to undertake similar reforms. This is particularly pertinent as discussions around gender-neutral language gain momentum nationwide

As a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, I have witnessed firsthand the impact of exclusionary language on individuals' sense of belonging and legitimacy. Language shapes our perceptions and experiences; when our state's constitution uses gender-specific terms, it sends a message—intentional or not—that leadership is inherently male. This can discourage women and non-binary individuals from aspiring to public office and perpetuates outdated gender norms.

In closing, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for **Senate Bill 733**. This legislation is a necessary step toward ensuring that Maryland's Constitution embodies the values of equality and inclusiveness that we, as a state, strive to uphold. By adopting gender-neutral language, we affirm the dignity and worth of all individuals, fostering a more just and representative government.

Best,

Ronnie L. Taylor

Ronnie L. Taylor

Sources:

1. [As female representation hits new highs, constitutions still assume officials are male | AP News](#)
2. [More Than a Woman to Me: The Need for Gender Inclusive Language in Court Opinions and Statutes Relating to Abortion and Reproductive Health](#)
3. [The Gender Politics of Legal Language and Its Implications - NLIU Law Review](#)