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BILL: Senate Bill 0234 - Housing and Community Development - Homeless Shelter Certification Program - Establishment

DATE: January 21, 2025

POSITION: FAVORABLE

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

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Annapolis Pride’s mission is to advocate for, empower, and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community in Anne Arundel County to live fully and authentically. Our vision is a safe, equitable, and anti-racist community where people of all identities thrive.

As such, the Board of Directors of Annapolis Pride **supports** Senate Bill 234, Establishing a homeless shelter certification program and requiring the Department to develop certain operational and building standards for homeless shelters and minimum standards for the protection of the rights of shelter residents; and requiring the operator of a homeless shelter to participate in a Homeless Management Information System.

This legislation will ensure that there are protections in place for the most vulnerable members of Maryland’s communities. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ (while they only make up 10% of the general youth population). As for why so many LGBTQ youth face homelessness the Williams Institute noted that 68% of the homeless youth they served had a history of family rejection, 65% had a history of mental health issues (such as depression or anxiety), and 54% had a history of family abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual).

Many LGBTQ youth have been abused at homeless shelters, especially those meant for adults, while many others avoid shelters altogether according to the National Coalition for the Homeless. Further, 58.7% of LGBTQ homeless youth have been sexually victimized compared to 33.4% of heterosexual homeless youth. LGBTQ youth are roughly 7.4x more likely to experience acts of sexual violence than heterosexual homeless youth, and LGBTQ homeless youth attempt suicide at much higher rates (62%) than heterosexual homeless youth (29%). It is imperative that here, in Maryland, better certification and data reporting is in place to ensure that some of the most marginalized members of the community like our LGBTQ+ youth and Transgender People of Color can be protected and have safe shelter.

Accordingly, Annapolis Pride respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on Senate Bill 234.