



LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **HB0093/SB0234 Department of Housing and Community Development - Homeless Shelter Homeless Shelter Certification Program Establishment**

Organization: PFLAG Salisbury Inc., PO Box 5107, Salisbury Maryland 21802

Submitted by: Dr. Nicole Hollywood, Board Member

Position: **FAVORABLE**

SALISBURY PFLAG SUPPORT NON-DISCRIMINATION IN MARYLAND SHELTERS

This testimony is being submitted on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury, the Salisbury, Maryland Chapter of PFLAG National, the nation's first and largest national organization dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQIA+ people and their families.

During the past several years, there has been an increase in data collection focused on unhoused people and this research has observed and described the disparities experienced by LGBTQIA+ individuals in shelters and on the streets.

- Over 17% of sexual minority adults report that they have experienced homelessness in their lifetime, which is more than twice what has been found in a general population,
- 30% of LGBTQIA+ youth reported experiencing homelessness or housing instability at some point.
- LGBTQ+ youth are 120% more likely to experience homelessness than their cisgender heterosexual peers,
- While LGBTQ+ youth make up only 7% of the total U.S. youth population, they comprise an astounding 40% of all young people experiencing homelessness

The consequences of homelessness, particularly for LGBTQ youth, are far reaching, profound, and proven to be detrimental to mental and physical health. Further, according to a Center for American Progress report, homelessness is the greatest predictor of involvement with the juvenile justice system.

LGBTQIA+ youth usually face homelessness after fleeing abuse and a lack of acceptance at home because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Once homeless, and with few resources at hand, LGBTQIA+ youth are pushed towards criminalized behaviors such as drug sales, theft, or survival sex, which increase their risk of arrest and detainment. Simply put, LGBTQIA+ youth are at a higher risk of both homelessness and incarceration, and the many deleterious harms accompanying these situations.

PFLAG Salisbury serves a large geographic area. This area includes Dorchester, Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset counties, a rural region significantly distanced from mainland Maryland, facing ever-growing disparities when it comes to resources for the LGBTQIA+ community. More specifically, PFLAG Salisbury operates in a part of the state where there is a severe shortage of homeless shelters and no LGBTQIA+ dedicated or affirming shelters. Accordingly, making Maryland's shelters more inclusive is an urgent need.

PFLAG Salisbury strongly supports HB0093/SB0234 Department of Housing and Community Development - Homeless Shelter Homeless Shelter Certification Program Establishment and recommends a favorable report from the committee.

Appendix

Center for American Progress. (2007). LGBT Youth An Epidemic of Homelessness: Full Report. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/566c7f0c2399a3bdabb57553/t/566cc0fb2399a3bdabb7de23/1449967867985/2007-NGLTF-NCH-LGBT-Youth_An-Epidemic-of-Homelessness-FULL-REPORT1.pdf

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Prison Policy Project (2019). LGBT Youth. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2019/01/22/lgbtq_youth/

The Trevor Project (2022). Homelessness and Housing Instability Among LGBT Youth. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/homelessness-and-housing-instability-among-lgbtq-youth-feb-2022/>

Williams Institute (2020). Homelessness Among LGBT Adults. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-homelessness-us/>

WMDT (2023). Homelessness Growing in Salisbury A Need for More Community Support. <https://www.wmdt.com/2023/09/homelessness-growing-in-salisbury-a-need-for-more-community-support/>