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Wednesday February 19, 2025

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
House Health and Government Operations Committee
241 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony of Trans Maryland

IN SUPPORT OF

HOUSE BILL #783: Health Occupations - Structural Racism Training

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee:

Trans Maryland is a multi-racial, multi-gender community power-building organization for Maryland's trans community. As improving equitable access to health care in Maryland is a key part of our mission, we strongly support House Bill 783, which we believe will take critical steps to ensure medical providers understand the lived realities of the communities that they serve.

Under current Maryland law, licensed healthcare providers are required to complete training on implicit bias, which is premised on the idea that if individuals are aware of the existence of subconscious biases, they will be less likely to act upon them. Unfortunately, this rarely works in practice in the medium or long term, both because the effects of such training tend to diminish the further away one is from it and because ultimately implicit bias training does little to undermine the biases themselves. Indeed, when handled poorly, implicit bias training can even make discrimination worse, as participants may leave feeling their biases are justified and shared by others.

House Bill 783 provides a potential solution to this problem by tying implicit bias training to instruction on structural racism. Participants are not merely reminded of their preexisting biases, but have those biases directly confronted by the lived realities of racial minorities, as well as how those lived realities impact access to health care, education, employment, and housing.

While we do not expect structural racism training to magically solve the problem of racism, it at least contests the assumptions that too often underlie racism and provides an evidentiary basis for growth. For this reason, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 783.