

Wednesday February 12, 2025

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary
House Ways and Means Committee
131 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony of Wren Massey

IN OPPOSITION TO

House Bill #1385: Children - Parental Rights - Educational Rights

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Wren Massey and I grew up going to schools in the Washington County Public School system and am currently an undergraduate at the University of Maryland. I also came out as nonbinary to my peers in the eighth grade and became the president of North Hagerstown High School's Sexuality and Gender Alliance Club (SAGA) in tenth grade.

HB1385 is dangerous to queer and otherwise marginalized communities on so many levels.

SAGA is a club that was created to be a safe space for queer students and allies at school, for those who needed time where they could be themselves free of judgement. Every single year that I was a part of the club, there was a discussion of what to tell parents to disguise the club. This was not because we were being sneaky or nefarious, but because many of my peers expressed real fears of physical consequences of their parents associating them with an LGBTQ+ organization. This was also why our club had a staunch "no outing others" rule as it is not always safe to exist as a queer person in our society.

Allowing people to control their own coming out stories is not just about safety, but also about respecting their personal journey. Sometimes people come out to different people at different times because they are simply still figuring out their identity and some spaces are simply more low stakes for personal exploration than others. By forcing teachers to ask parents for permission for using their student's pronouns undermines the journey and autonomy of transgender students and potentially puts them in dangerous situations at home.

The horrific potential impact of just this one subsection of the bill shows how dangerous the bill would be if it became law. This bill gives parents a gross amount of control over the educational system for not just their child, but for all students.

For these reasons, I urge an unfavorable report on HB1385.