

Hello, my name is Michael LaMarco, and I am a Public Policy Intern writing on behalf of Annapolis Pride. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **HB0355**, which expands education for students on human trafficking and sex trafficking.

Education is one of the most effective tools we have to prevent harm before it happens. By increasing student awareness of trafficking risks, warning signs, and methods of prevention, this bill empowers young people with knowledge that can quite literally save lives. Trafficking often thrives in silence and confusion, HB0355 helps replace that silence with clarity and preparedness.

This legislation is especially important for vulnerable populations, including LGBTQIA+ youth. LGBTQIA+ young people are disproportionately targeted for trafficking due to factors such as family rejection, housing instability, and social isolation. When students understand how trafficking operates and how to seek help, they are better equipped to protect themselves and their peers.

HB0355 promotes student safety through proactive, preventative education rather than reactive intervention after harm has already occurred. It sends a clear message that the state values the well-being of all students and is committed to giving them the tools they need to stay safe.

For these reasons, Annapolis Pride strongly supports HB0355. Thank you for your time and consideration.