



2526 SAINT PAUL STREET
BALTIMORE, MD 21218
TEL (410) 625-LGBT (5428)
FAX (410) 625-7423
www.freestate-justice.org

Bill: SB0401
Title: The Accessible to All Act
Date: February 12, 2020
Committee: Judicial Proceedings & Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs
Committees
Position: Support

To the Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., the Honorable Paul G. Pinsky and
Esteemed Members of the Committees:

FreeState Justice is Maryland's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) civil rights advocacy organization. Each year, we provide free legal services to hundreds of LGBTQ Marylanders facing discrimination. We strive to create an equitable Maryland where LGBTQ Marylanders can live full lives with dignity and respect in all spaces.

Currently, single occupancy restrooms exist in publicly owned buildings and places of public accommodation across Maryland. However, despite being completely enclosed restrooms with one toilet and a door that locks, some continue to have gendered images and language that exclude members of the Intersex, Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming community.

By mandating that public spaces and places of public accommodations remove exclusionary gendered signage, this bill will build a more inclusive and affirming community for intersex, transgender and gender non-conforming Marylanders. No longer will some Marylanders feel excluded or disrespected because of symbolic violence that renders them invisible. This bill makes a significant and important contribution to making our public spaces truly accessible, safe, and validating for all our citizens.

Public health and medical research has demonstrated how the seemingly small symbolic exclusions and violence faced by minorities in everyday life compound, leading to increased stress and disproportionately negative health outcomes. Therefore, removing exclusionary symbols, at little to no cost, can be a positive step in remedying health disparities.

We strongly support this legislation and urge you to vote favorably.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Procopio
Executive Director

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*FreeState Justice, Inc. (formerly FreeState Legal Project, Inc., merging with Equality Maryland)
is a social justice organization that works through direct legal services, legislative and policy advocacy, and community
engagement to enable Marylanders across the spectrum of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identities to be
free to live authentically, with safety and dignity, in all communities throughout our state.*