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February 11, 2020

Senate Committee on Judicial Proceedings
Maryland General Assembly
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Senator Smith:

GLSEN MD is pleased to have the opportunity to review SB 401; Places of Public Accommodation and Public Buildings - Single-Occupancy Public Restrooms - Availability (The Accessible to All Act). This legislation would require that certain single-occupancy restrooms be made available to persons of any gender identity and that any associated signage be gender-inclusive.

We at GLSEN MD strive to make sure every school in our state offers a safe and inclusive environment in which for every child to learn. We believe that all public accommodations should reflect this same spirit. In order to fully embrace the diversity that makes Maryland what it is, we must make our communities safe for all residents. LGBTQ children and adults deserve the same basic respect and access to public accommodations as our heterosexual and cisgender peers.

Under the 2014 Fairness for All Marylanders Act (FAMA), Maryland greatly expanded protections for transgender individuals which included the use of locker rooms and other public accommodations. In keeping with the intent of FAMA, SB 401; Places of Public Accommodation and Public Buildings - Single-Occupancy Public Restrooms - Availability (The Accessible to All Act) seeks to reduce the stigma and violence experienced by the transgender community in public restrooms. According to the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE), there are at least 1.4 million transgender people in the United States. In a 2015 NCTE survey of 27,715 transgender individuals, 31% of respondents reported having experienced some form of mistreatment in places of public accommodation. A recent study conducted by the Human Rights Campaign involving transgender and gender expansive students between the ages of 13 and 17 from all 50 states and the District of Columbia found that 58% cannot use the restroom that best reflects their gender because they do not feel safe using them (HRC 2018 LGBTQ Youth Report). Many transgender people refrain from using the restroom when out in public in an effort to avoid conflict or danger.

Out of consideration for the mental and physical health, as well as the equitable treatment of transgender individuals, GLSEN MD strongly urges a favorable report on SB 401; The Accessible to All Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kimberly Mooney!". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Kimberly Mooney
Board Chair, GLSEN MD

