



February 12, 2020

**Written Testimony in Support of SB0401:
Places of Public Accommodation and Public Buildings - Single-Occupancy Public
Restrooms - Availability (The Accessible to All Act)**

Senator Smith, Chair, Senator Waldstreicher, Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Proceedings Committee:

MoCo Pride Center is proud to fully support SB0401, also known as The Accessible to All Act.

There is no good reason for requiring people to choose a gender before entering a single-occupancy restroom. By eliminating binary gendered words and images in the signs posted on these restrooms, Maryland would make nearly all public spaces as defined in the bill more welcoming to:

- Transgender, non-binary or gender non-conforming people
- Women who are designated as female at birth (cisgender women), who often must wait in a line for the women's restroom to become vacant
- Parents who are perceived as a different gender than their young children
- Disabled people who need the assistance of a family, friend, or direct support professional in order to use the restrooms
- Elders with dementia, or other disabilities, who require assistance to use the restroom
- People of color who are perceived as threatening when entering or exiting an available single occupancy restroom with gendered signage
- People who become suddenly ill and must get to a restroom immediately

When a policy or a bill like SB0401 is introduced, homophobic and transphobic individuals make the argument that it will only really help transgender people – a relatively small portion of the population. Per the examples above, this is simply not true. Gender-inclusive restrooms, sometimes referred to as “all gender restrooms” or “gender-neutral restrooms” benefit everyone who lives in, works in, goes to school in

and/or visits the state of Maryland. Everyone is able to participate more actively in their communities and in public spaces.

SB0401: Places of Public Accommodation and Public Buildings - Single-Occupancy Public Restrooms - Availability (The Accessible to All Act) will have no effect on state revenues; will have minimal effect on local revenues (any cost for enforcing the law can be absorbed by the fines each county or municipality sets); and will also have very limited effects on small business owners, who will be granted more than enough time to replace restroom signs before enforcement fines can take place. The cost of each sign is less than \$100 in most cases.

MoCo Pride Center works to protect the rights of those who are often invisible and invalidated. We strongly encourage Maryland's legislature to join California, New Mexico, Illinois, Vermont and other states and cities in affirming the right of access to public facilities for all.

Please file a favorable report on SB0401: Places of Public Accommodation and Public Buildings - Single-Occupancy Public Restrooms - Availability (The Accessible to All Act) so that it can move forward to the senate floor for consideration.

Sincerely,

MoCo Pride Center's Board of Directors:

*Ezra Towne, Han Malyn, Jill McCrory, John Grimes, Marty Drake,
Phillip Alexander Downie, Renoir Dawson-Finan, Shelly Mohnkern*