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I ask that you support Imari's Business Pride Act to support LGBT-owned firms participating in state-contracting opportunities. Imari Prout is my younger brother. He was born and raised in Baltimore City, to loving parents- that struggled through the Great Recession. Upon graduating from Baltimore City College in 2014, he went in Baltimore City Community College to study mental health. He dropped out one class short of graduating so that he could pursue his goal of being an entrepreneur- selling gender affirming apparel full-time from our family's clothing store in Downtown Baltimore.

Through his life, he experienced many hardships, from the failure of a productive store space, to being fired from employment. These challenges only intensified after his official gender change- on legal documents in 2017 and 2018. He was attacked multiple times by co-workers and customers at places of unemployment. He was fired from another employer- a lawsuit that he would have one- had it not been for his death.

He led a good fight and could not fight any longer after an incident of medical malpractice. He died by suicide on October 15, 2019.

Although, Imari's retail outlet would not be able to benefit from state contracting. I talked to him about the importance of disadvantaged and marginalized groups to build themselves up through business. There are over 100 LGBT-owned firms that are members of the MD LGBT Chamber of Commerce. Expanding the definition of MBE will help more companies to compete for state contracts and build up their ability to employ disadvantaged groups. Marginalized groups, such as the trans- community which Imari was a part of and advocated for via the Baltimore Safe Haven and Baltimore Trans-Alliance, will be able to have the opportunity to find a job, work for themselves, and give back to the community. The dignity of being able to do for self and others and earn a paycheck. Lastly, this bill would make Maryland-contracting more representative by making us the first state in the nation to recognize LGBT-E owned firms in government contracting.

[Movement Advancement Project | State Profiles \(lgbtmap.org\)](https://lgbtmap.org)