



Testimony Favorable to HB0130: Commission on LGBTQ Affairs - Established

January 14, 2021

Delegate Pendergrass, Chair; Delegate Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair; and esteemed members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

My name is Ezra Towne, and my pronouns are they/them/theirs. I am a parent of two children (ages 8 and 13) who attend Montgomery County Public Schools. I am also a nonbinary transmasculine person. **I submit this testimony today in support of HB0130: Commission on LGBTQ Affairs - Established.**

When my second child was born, I began to concentrate my advocacy within and around Montgomery County. My post graduate school work for feminist, LGBTQ, socioeconomic and racial justice national non profits became part of my personal history and not where I felt called to be. This shift in my advocacy both narrowed and widened my perspective on LGBTQ state and local policy. Five years after becoming a full time stay at home parent, I became one of three co founders of the MoCo Pride Center.

Maryland needs this bill because there is no similar office at the state level, and only a few counties and cities have an LGBTQ Affairs office. This Commission will

provide an easily identifiable state office where municipal, county, and state LGBTQ concerns can be addressed. The conversations that would happen via this commission are crucial to achieving equity and justice for queer communities in Maryland.

Among many other thing, an LGBTQ Commission would:

- provide a clearly identifiable statewide office accessible to Maryland's residents city and county governments, and state legislature.
- help LGBTQ advocates support underemployed black and indigenous queer, trans, and gender nonconforming youth and adults, who are disproportionately effected by lack of shared knowledge and/or resources.
- assist different entities like state and local departments of education, social service agencies, police, fire, and ems departments, EEO offices,
- coalesce professional and grassroots advocates across multiple civil rights axes in/outside of official organizations and government dedicated to civil rights.

I am deeply grateful and very privileged to be given an opportunity to speak with you today. I urge the Health and Government Operations Committee to file a favorable report for **HB0130: Commission on LGBTQ Affairs– Established.**

Sincerely,



MoCo Pride Center

Board Member Emeritus

District 18

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