



SB0768 – Nondiscrimination and LGBTQ+ Individuals

Presented to Hon. Will Smith and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings
Committee March 9, 2021 1:00 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to **issue a favorable report on SB0768 – Nondiscrimination and LGBTQ+ Individuals**, sponsored by Senator Mary Washington.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice for all Marylanders. We believe that all people deserve to live a life full of dignity, autonomy, and security, and we know that this makes for healthier individuals, families, and communities. NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland recognizes that victims of LGBTQ+ discrimination are members of our most vulnerable populations—they hold intersectional identities in regards to sex, gender identity, and sexuality which puts them at greater risk of gender-based bias, stereotyping, and oppression. These populations have reported disproportionate rates of discrimination and they deserve, at the very least, support and protection from the state.

Discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals has a damaging impact on these individuals' mental and physical health. A [study](#) conducted by NPR found that more than half of LGBTQ+ individuals have experienced discrimination at some point in their lives, and one-fifth of LGBTQ+ individuals have avoided seeking medical care for fear of discrimination. The NPR study additionally reported that fear of discrimination can create chronic health problems such as depression and heart disease. Allowing individuals to live in a society that does not protect their right to exist without fear of discrimination is inherently an act of violence. This violent act has detrimental repercussions on individuals' ability to conduct their lives in a healthy, dignified, and autonomous manner. These repercussions necessarily impact the health and wellbeing of our entire community. SB0768 provides a remedy to this sweeping issue.

Those of us in the reproductive justice community are acutely aware of the dangers of not addressing barriers to housing, equity in the courts, social assistance and human services, and barriers to familial justice. The proposed policies would promote healthy families, success for LGBTQ-owned small businesses, safe and happy youth, and actual justice in the courts through the prohibition of discrimination, and appropriate training for state actors.

Improving the safety, well-being, and stability for Marylanders is always in the best interest of our community. For this reason, **NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges a favorable report on SB0768**. Thank you for your time and consideration.