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SB0768 / HB1088 – SUPPORT

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SB0768 / HB1088 – SUPPORT

“Nondiscrimination and LGBTQ+ Individuals”

Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Hearing: March 9, 2021

Dear Chair and Members of the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

This letter from the Movement Advancement Project (MAP) is to support SB0768/HB1088, “Nondiscrimination and LGBTQ+ Individuals.” MAP is an independent, nonprofit think tank that provides rigorous research, insight, and communications that help speed equality and opportunity for all, including for LGBTQ people.

As part of our work, we evaluate states based on nearly 40 different LGBTQ-related laws and policies affecting many areas of life, from nondiscrimination to healthcare to protections for LGBTQ youth. Based on this research, we create maps and state profiles that rank and categorize states according to how comprehensive their protections are and whether they are inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity.ⁱ MAP and other national organizations, as well as state and local community groups, researchers, media, policymakers, and more regularly use this research to understand the state policy landscape for LGBTQ people and what gaps in protections remain to be addressed through policy.

We support passage of SB0768/HB1088, “Nondiscrimination and LGBTQ+ Individuals,” because of the significant expansions in vital protections it would provide for LGBTQ Marylanders, including LGBTQ youth and families in the child welfare system. There are many new and needed protections in this bill, including:

- **Adding explicit LGBTQ protections to all Marylanders receiving services or participating in programs through contracts, grants, or any other entity receiving public funding.** Currently, existing policies may only apply inconsistently. For example, existing foster care regulations only cover residential care programs, and the state’s policy for LGBTQ youth in the child welfare system only applies to youth in out of home care. This bill would extend foster care regulations to all programs and the policy for LGBTQ youth to those receiving services in home while in preventative services.
- **Adding explicit gender identity protections to families, kin, and foster and adoptive parents.** Currently, CMR 07.01.03.03 only provides explicit protections based on sexual orientation.
- **Requiring that employees and contractors receiving training on how to affirm and support LGBTQ youth and adults they serve.** This is critical to ensure that these protections are fully realized for all Marylanders. Optional training too often results in inconsistent experiences across a state, with disproportionate harm to those in already under-resourced areas, such as rural communities.
- **Adding explicit protections for Marylanders accessing the court system and for those receiving various forms of social services.** Equal and explicit protections are especially important to improve equitable outcomes and access to needed resources.



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Maryland is already a national leader in LGBTQ-inclusive nondiscrimination law, such as in employment, housing, and public places. If passed, SB0768/HB1088 would significantly strengthen and expand protections for LGBTQ youth and families throughout the state, including those with less access to such services such as those in rural communities. This would significantly improve Maryland’s leadership in terms of fully protecting not only LGBTQ adults, but also LGBTQ youth and families.

We urge a favorable report on SB0768/HB1088, or “Nondiscrimination and LGBTQ+ Individuals.” Thank you for your time and consideration.

ⁱ www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps