



Samantha Jones, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team

House Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Testimony on: SB0768 - Nondiscrimination and LGBTQ+ Individuals

Position: Favorable

Committee Hearing Date: March 9, 2021

Sponsored By: Senator Mary Washington

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grassroots organization with more than 2,500 members who live in a broad range of communities in Montgomery County, from Bethesda at the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that uplift all members of its communities. DTMG supports SB0768.

SB0768 would expand Maryland's existing protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and gender-nonconforming (LGBTQ+) state residents and help ensure equal access to housing, court services, and other state programs. Maryland has some strong protections in place for LGBTQ+ people, including current protections against employment discrimination. SB0768 builds on that foundation and addresses gaps in the current law that allow for continued discrimination.

This bill is both important and timely. Today, LGBTQ+ people, especially transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals, face increased discrimination at every turn, including when trying to find safe, comfortable housing and when interacting with state courts. In 2019, the Williams Institute found that "research shows a widespread pattern of disparate and unequal treatment and experiences faced by LGBT[Q+] court users, witnesses, and parties in courtrooms, jury rooms and other segments of the judicial system."¹

Similarly, the Center for American Progress reported in 2020 that, "more than 1 in 3 LGBTQ Americans faced discrimination of some kind in the past year, including more than 3 in 5 transgender Americans. Discrimination adversely affects the mental and economic well-being of many LGBTQ Americans, including 1 in 2 who report moderate or significant negative psychological impacts."² SB0768 would directly address the harm LGBTQ+ Marylanders face due to discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Maryland is a national leader in promoting and protecting the wellbeing of LGBTQ+ state residents. The passage of SB0768 will ensure that Maryland continues to take proactive steps toward this important goal.

¹ <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Testimony-Equality-Act-Judicial-System-Apr-2019.pdf>

² <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbtq-rights/reports/2020/10/06/491052/state-lgbtq-community-2020/>

For the reasons mentioned above, DTMG supports SB0768 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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