



2526 SAINT PAUL STREET  
BALTIMORE, MD 21218  
TEL (410) 625-LGBT (5428)  
FAX (410) 625-7423  
www.freestate-justice.org

February 14, 2022

The Honorable C.T. Wilson  
House Economic Matters Committee  
Room 231  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

## Testimony of FreeState Justice

### IN SUPPORT OF

### HB572: Places of Public Accommodation and Public Buildings - Gender-Inclusive Signage

To the Honorable Chair C.T. Wilson, Vice Chair Brian Crosby, and esteemed members of the Economic Matters Committee:

FreeState Justice is Maryland's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) civil rights advocacy organization. Each year, we provide free legal services to dozens, if not hundreds, of LGBTQ+ Marylanders who could not otherwise be able to afford an attorney, as well as advocate more broadly on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community.

We write today in support of House Bill 572, which would require single-occupancy restrooms across the state to be designated with gender-neutral signage. This bill will not only benefit nonbinary, transgender, and gender-nonconforming Marylanders, for whom using the restroom can be a particularly stressful experience, it also benefits individuals with disabilities and their caretakers, parents of young children, and anyone who has ever waited in a long line for a gendered restroom while the other sits empty and unused.

Since 2019, Baltimore City has had a similar ordinance, which has required single-occupancy restrooms to be labelled with gender-neutral signage. After more than two years of implementation, there have been no unforeseen consequences, no rush of frivolous lawsuits

#### LEADERSHIP STAFF

Jeremy LaMaster  
**Executive Director**

Phillip Westry  
**Legal Director**

Shayne Miller-Westfield  
**Development Director**

C.P. Hoffman  
**Policy Director**

Tina Jones  
**Programs Director**

#### BOARD

R. Eric Thomas  
**President**  
ELLE.com

Lee Westgate, MBA, MSW, LCSW-C  
**Vice President**  
University of Maryland, School of Social Work

Lindsay Young  
**Treasurer**  
Quiet Wealth

Riley Grace Roshong  
**Secretary**  
University of Maryland Francis King School of Law

Lee Carpenter, Esq.  
Niles, Barton, & Wilmer, LLC

Stephanie Castro  
University of Baltimore School of Law

Brenda Dorsch, LCPC  
Life Journey Counseling

Brianna January, MPP  
Media Matters for America

Mala Malhotra-Ortiz, Esq.  
W.L. Gore

Rianna Matthews-Brown  
Johns Hopkins University, Office of the President

Ebony Thompson, Esq.  
Venable LLP

Jessica P. Weber, Esq.  
Brown, Goldstein & Levy, LLP

Amanda Peskin  
University of Maryland School of Law

Jessica Landers Hopkins  
Exelon

John Cromwell  
Comcast

Andrew Adelman  
Angelica Newsome

Charlie Wedderien

Dylan Burns

Evan Borodin

Jaye Yarbrough

against places of public accommodation, and no wave of sex-related crimes. The sky has not fallen in Baltimore as a result of Ordinance #19-265, nor has it fallen in the multiple other jurisdictions that have implemented similar laws, including the District of Columbia, New York City, or Philadelphia, all of which have been in place since 2016. Indeed, DC's Municipal Rule 4-802 has been in place since 2006, without issue.

FreeState Justice strongly believes that based on the experience in Baltimore City and beyond, requiring single-occupancy restrooms in places of public accommodation to be marked with gender-neutral signage will not have any unforeseen negative repercussions. Instead, it will improve the lives of many Marylanders who are limited by the current gendered nature of many single-occupancy facilities. This includes not only LGBTQ+ Marylanders, but also individuals with disabilities who may simply want to use the nearest restroom, parents and other caretakers who may not be the same gender as the individuals they are caring for, and women across the state, who often find themselves waiting in extraordinarily long lines while the designated "Men's" restroom sits vacant.

For these reasons, FreeState Justice urges a favorable report on House Bill 572.