



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Jill P. Carter
In Favor of SB0550
- The Transgender Respect, Agency and Dignity Act -
Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee
On February 17, 2022.**

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

Today I am introducing Senate Bill 550, a bill intended to confront extreme safety risks some Marylanders face while incarcerated. This bill changes the intake process in Maryland's carceral facilities, requiring that intake staff ask the gender identity, pronouns and honorifics of individuals at the onset of incarceration. In doing so, we can reduce safety risks for LGBTQ+ individuals through appropriate housing.

Federal data reveals that members of the LGBTQ+ community, particularly transgender women, encounter extremely high rates of violence and sexual abuse while incarcerated, especially when housed in facilities that do not match their gender identity. During incarceration, 40 percent of transgender women experience harassment and violence. These women, human beings who are our constituents, family members, and friends, experience violence at a rate 10 to 13 times higher than other incarcerated individuals.

To confront this violence, Senate Bill 550 builds on the protections outlined in the Federal Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003. This bill takes into account the personal safety of incarcerated Marylanders who are transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, or intersex. It is our obligation as lawmakers to ensure these protections. When data

shows us that a specific demographic - no matter how small - experiences heightened safety risks, we must use our legislative bandwidth to ameliorate it.

The number of individuals this legislation affects in Maryland is estimated to be between 30 and 40 at a given time. A sentence of incarceration should not run concurrent with a sentence of preventable violence and sexual violation.

When advocates from across the state appear in front of this legislative body to tell us about the cries for help they receive from affected individuals, it is our duty to act. With the knowledge that transgender women and other LGBTQ+ people are harrassed, assaulted, and sometimes killed because of inappropriate housing, it is nothing short of shameful not to combat this through proper housing during incarceration.

The safety of every single Marylander is our responsibility. For this reason, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 550. Thank you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jill P. Carter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jill P. Carter