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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB486: Places of Public Accommodation and Public Buildings – Gender-Inclusive Signage **Senate Judicial Proceedings and Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committees** **Tuesday, February 15, 2022 | 1:00 PM**

We all use public, single-occupancy bathrooms on a regular basis-- in planes, hospitals, our homes, and more. Making these restrooms gender-specific (female/male) restricts access and can create discomfort.

Women face longer wait times for bathrooms ([an average of 6+ minutes](#)) than men, who are delayed by approximately just 11 seconds. Labeling restrooms with signage for any gender can reduce wait times for women to [less than 1.5 minutes](#).

Gender-inclusive restrooms are family-friendly, enabling parents to assist their children. They are also more accessible and comfortable for people with caregivers.

Trans- and non-binary people can be at risk when using gender-specific facilities. In a national survey, [60% of transgender people](#) avoid public restrooms due to apprehension about being confronted. This is a real fear-- [12% have been verbally harassed; 9% were denied access; 1% were physically attacked; and 1% were sexually assaulted](#). In fact, [36% of trans- or non-binary students](#) with restricted bathroom or locker room access reported being sexually assaulted in 2019.

[SB486](#) requires a simple, inexpensive fix to make **ALL** feel welcome! Many buildings already have single-occupancy restrooms; this bill just requires them to affix an inexpensive, gender-neutral sign to the bathroom door.

This bill dovetails well with [SB330](#) (Public Buildings - Diaper-Changing Facilities), sponsored by Senator Smith (2019) since a changing table in a gender-inclusive bathroom is accessible to any child's caretaker.

The penalty is modest for non-compliance:

- The first offense is a warning;
- After 30 days, if the business does not comply, a \$100 fine may be assessed; and
- If after another 30 days, the business still does not put up a sign, it will be fined \$250 for the third and subsequent violations.

If passed, Maryland will join five states, four major cities, and Baltimore and Howard Counties in making its single-user bathrooms open and inclusive for ALL.

I urge a favorable report on SB486.