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HB 453 The Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act

Hearing before the House Judiciary Committee, February 8, 2022

Position: Favorable

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization that seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. Among its projects is a longstanding commitment to achieving constitutionally adequate health care at the Baltimore City Detention Center, which is under the control of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. Because of this commitment, and because HB 453 is a matter of fundamental human rights, the PJC supports HB 453.

As counsel for the class of detainees in the city jail in the case of *Duvall v. Hogan*, I have encountered human beings that have suffered all of the dangers and indignities referenced in the bill's preamble and in the studies cited by other proponents of the bill: Transgender men and women and nonbinary individuals who have been stigmatized, shamed, harassed, misgendered, denied safe housing, denied gender-affirming health care, sexually humiliated, sexually assaulted, and beaten due to their gender identity.

Though the time an individual spends in the jail may be shorter than for those serving time in Maryland's prisons, the dangers they face are no less real and life-threatening. Just last year a transgender woman died while housed with men in the jail. Her family could not obtain information about her death, and she was consistently misgendered by DPSCS representatives and medical personnel and referred to by a name she no longer used.

In her memory, I testify in favor of this bill, to prevent such atrocities in the future.

For the foregoing reasons, the PJC supports HB 453. Should you have any questions, please contact Debra Gardner, Legal Director, at 410-625-9409, ext. 228 or gardnerd@publicjustice.org.