

## HB40 Testimony

Good Afternoon Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and distinguished members of the committee.

My name is Brandon Russell, and I am a resident of St. Mary's County. I felt it important to offer testimony on HB40 because LGBTQ+ residents in my county often face being othered in their daily lives. I have a specific example I would like to share with you to illustrate this point. For privacy purposes, and to avoid potential retaliation, I will keep some specific details more vague.

I am part of a group that organizes LGBTQ+ related events in the Southern Maryland region. Last year, this group held an event at a county owned public park.

This park has two sets of restrooms, one at the north end and another at the south end. All restrooms are marked with gender specific signage. When we attempted to make all restrooms gender-neutral, our signs were removed. Park staff informed us that we could not do this at the north end restrooms because they were multi-stall. The south end restrooms were single occupancy, so we were told those could be gender-neutral.

I understand HB40 applies only to single occupancy restrooms. However, my example highlights an undeserved hardship placed on LGBTQ+ individuals looking for gender neutral restrooms. The distance between the north end and south end restrooms is about one-third of a mile. Imagine attending an event with your LGBTQ+ community, expecting inclusivity, and then being made to walk a third of a mile just to use the bathroom.

I support this bill, but I ask that further considerations are made to prevent situations like the one I described. It may not seem like a big deal, but these instances contribute to feeling othered and decrease the likelihood that an individual will feel comfortable in their community.

Brandon Russell  
240-718-6624  
brandon4stmarys@gmail.com