

SB0251 LGBTQIA+ Commission.pdf

Uploaded by: Camila Reynolds-Dominguez

Position: FAV



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The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
February 6, 2023

Testimony of FreeState Justice

IN SUPPORT OF SB0251: Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs - Alterations

To the Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan, and the esteemed committee:

FreeState Justice, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization. The mission of FreeState Justice, Inc. is to improve the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (“LGBTQIA+”) Marylanders. Programs include direct legal services, legislative advocacy, and community education and empowerment services. Our mission is to create a Maryland where the most vulnerable community members — including youth, communities of color, and transgender/gender-nonconforming folks — feel safe and empowered to live their lives authentically.

We write today in support of Senate Bill 251. The LGBTQIA+ community remains particularly vulnerable to marginalization, which is reflected in increased levels of poverty, public health disparities, and susceptibility to crime. All of which results in greater barriers to stability and self-sufficiency for the community, especially at the intersections of race, gender identity, age, and geography.

FreeState Justice supports changing the name of the LGBTQ Commission from LGBTQ to “LGBTQIA+” to reflect the diversity and lived experience of the community. We also support the expansion of the board from 15 to 21 members and efforts to bring in voices across racial, ethnic, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic, and residency. All of the proposed changes will help lift the voice of LGBTQIA+ people across Maryland while reducing stigma and discrimination.

FreeState Justice urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 251.

Phillip Westry, Esq. || *Executive Director, FreeState Justice*

*FreeState Justice, Inc. (formerly FreeState Legal Project, Inc., merging with Equality Maryland)
is a social justice organization that works through direct legal services, legislative and policy advocacy, and community engagement to enable Marylanders across the spectrum of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identities to be free to live authentically, with safety and dignity, in all communities throughout our state.*

SB 251 testimony final.pdf

Uploaded by: Isabella Shycoff

Position: FAV

SB 251

Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs - Alterations

Position: Favorable

Testimony by Isabella Shycoff

SB 251 and the cross-filed version, HB 141 strengthens and improves upon this relatively new but important State Commission. It broadens the name of the Commission, and includes Marylanders who identify as questioning, intersex, asexual, agender and others. In addition, it increases the number of Commissioners, staggers terms and seeks to expand the diversity among Commissioners.

These updates and clarifications will more accurately reflect the truly diverse and evolving nature of our community. By expanding the numbers of Commissioners and renaming, it sends a clear and unequivocal signal to the LGBTQIA+ community that this Commission is of, by and for them.

I urge a favorable report by the Committee.

SB 0251 Annapolis Pride .pdf

Uploaded by: Jaden Farris

Position: FAV



CELEBRATE. ENGAGE. UNITE.

February 7, 2023

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0251 — State Government - Commission on
LGBTQIA+ Affairs - Alterations**

The Board of Directors of Annapolis Pride enthusiastically supports Senate Bill 0251, which will ensure that the commission accurately and respectfully reflects the diversity of the LGBTQIA+ community. It is crucial to increase the number of commission members to ensure that individuals from a variety of backgrounds and lived-experiences are represented. The LGBTQIA+ community is not a monolith, and the expansion ensures voices of more people of color, transgender individuals, and individuals of varying abilities are heard.

Additionally, this bill would provide the commission with greater stability and continuity to carry out its important work. This would not only ensure that the commission is able to effectively work towards achieving its goals, but also ensure that the experiences and voices of the LGBTQIA+ community are better represented and heard. It is crucial that the LGBTQIA+ community is represented in decision-making and policy-making processes for the state.

For these reasons, Annapolis Pride respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 0251

Respectfully submitted,

Jaden Farris
Board Member
Annapolis Pride

Support SB 0251 - Trans Maryland.pdf

Uploaded by: Lee Blinder

Position: FAV

Trans Maryland
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Senate Bill # 0251: State Government - Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs - Alterations
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 7, 2023
Position: Support

Greetings, honorable Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the EEE Committee. My name is Lee Blinder, I use they/them pronouns, and I am the executive director of Trans Maryland, a multi-racial, multi-gender community power building organization for Maryland's trans community. Trans Maryland runs the state's largest volume name and gender marker change program, offering peer-to-peer guidance and financial assistance to Marylanders seeking a name and gender marker change, as well as providing support for social and medical transition through our programming that runs twelve months a year. We are deeply proud to serve as Maryland's transgender rights organization.

In addition to my work with Trans Maryland, I also serve as the chair of the policy committee for the Maryland Commission on LGBTQ Affairs, in that capacity and in my capacity as the executive director of Trans Maryland, I ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 0251.

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQ Affairs was created through legislation in 2021 by the Maryland General Assembly, and provides the first official representation in Maryland state government offices and agencies for LGBTQIA+ persons. The LGBTQIA+ community has lacked representation on the state level, and the creation of The Maryland Commission on LGBTQ Affairs was an essential first step towards addressing the significant barriers facing this historically and currently marginalized community. SB 0251 will make a few small but impactful changes to the legislation to assist the commission to fully realize our potential as the mouthpiece of the community to Maryland's government and governmental agencies, and ensure that all members of the community find themselves represented. These changes include, modernizing the acronym to use more inclusive language to reflect intersex, agender, asexual, and aromantic persons, expanding the number of commissioners to be consistent with the size of other similar commissions in the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives, and adding an additional detail to the language about the qualifications for membership of the commission to ensure the commission reflects the socioeconomic diversity of the State.

We urge a favorable report on this Bill SB 0251 to ensure the Commission on LGBTQ Affairs will embody the words of the first Black governor of Maryland - Governor Moore - who reaffirmed his pledge in his recent State of the State that we will leave no one behind, and enable the Commission to adequately reflect the diversity of the community we represent.

Informational Only Testimony SB251 - Maryland Comm

Uploaded by: Jeremy Browning

Position: INFO



**Maryland Commission
on LGBTQ Affairs**

**TESTIMONY OF JEREMY BROWNING
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR, MARYLAND COMMISSION ON LGBTQ AFFAIRS
INFORMATION STATEMENT ON SB0251
COMMISSION ON LGBTQIA+ AFFAIRS - ALTERATIONS**

FEBRUARY 7, 2023

SENATE - Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

The Hon. Brian J. Feldman, Chair
The Hon. Cheryl C Kagan Vice Chair

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide informational testimony on SB 0251 on behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQ Affairs. My name is Jeremy Browning, I am the Administrative Director of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQ Affairs.

I would like to commend the members of the General Assembly for their work on behalf of our LGBTQIA+ community and their families. The efforts to create a Commission and Office to address the needs and issues of the communities are laudable.

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQ Affairs was created by the 2021 Maryland General Assembly to assess challenges facing our LGBTQ community, collect data across state agencies, study and establish best practices for LGBTQ inclusion, and offer testimony on issues concerning LGBTQ persons before legislative and administrative bodies.

Senate bill 251 aims to make the commission more inclusive and representative of the diverse LGBTQIA+ communities in Maryland.

The bill would rename the commission to be the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, reflecting the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, agender, asexual, aromantic, and additional identities.

The bill would increase the number of commissioners from 15 members to 21 members which is consistent with the size of many other commissions in the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives. The bill also proposes changes to the membership of the commission by using more

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Maryland Commission on LGBTQ Affairs

specific language and in addition to the previous requirements that members reflect the age, gender, sexual orientation, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic diversity of the state.

Additionally, the bill removes the unnecessary use of “women and LGBTQIA+ persons,” since women are already included in the LGBTQIA+ acronym.

With this information, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, I conclude my testimony. I am optimistic that the Commission will work hard and have tremendous success in improving the lives of our LGBTQIA+ communities and their families. I look forward to furthering those activities and I would be happy to answer any questions.