

Trans Maryland
1800 E Northern Parkway #66332
Baltimore MD 21239



House Bill # 0141: State Government - Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs - Alterations
Health and Government Operations Committee
February 15, 2023
Position: Support

Greetings honorable Chair Peña-Melnyk, Vice Chair Kelly, and esteemed members of the 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 House Bill 141.

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. HB 0141 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 HB 0141 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 thereby enable the Commission to adequately reflect the diversity of the community we represent.