



**House Bill 426**  
**Correctional Facilities - Transgender, Nonbinary, and Intersex Inmates**  
**Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act**  
**February 21, 2023**  
**Support**

Dear Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

The Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition is proud to present the public comments of Maryland residents who strongly support the Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act. From Baltimore City and Frederick County, to Howard County and Harford County, these Marylanders know that we must continue to be a leader when it comes to protecting trans people. Trans people face a staggering amount of discrimination and violence while incarcerated, both from other inmates and DPSCS staff. At a time when trans people are under attack across the country, we must ensure that Maryland is taking steps to protect those behind bars by giving them the dignity and agency they deserve.

**Public Comments:**

I am a Lutheran Pastor who is nonbinary, and ministers to many transgender folks. When two of my congregants were arrested last year, they were treated with the utmost lack of respect in the prison system. They were not safe, did not have access to hormones, and were disrespected by the guards. Trans people deserve to be honored and respected when they are incarcerated.  
Emily Scott, Baltimore City

As a career public defender I have represented hundreds of people confined in a range of correctional institutions. They are not safe environments for so many vulnerable people, but particularly trans inmates. It is critical that you do whatever you can to protect them.  
Joanna Silver, Montgomery County

Gender expansive individuals deserve safe, gender affirming environments to more adeptly rehabilitate during the incarceration period and subsequently return to society as contributing members.  
Nicky Agyevi-Armah, Frederick County

I am transgender. I did not realize the truth about myself until I was 65 but rather spent most of my life in deep denial. I did not want to be transgender. When I could no longer deny being transgender, I realized that accepting myself meant accepting all those whose lives are different. I realized that I had to step away from the privilege that I had as being seen as a white male to being someone with less privilege. I realized that privilege is a sin given by society. To be treated with respect is not something that can be given based on any difference. It was a realization that respecting the other was required to be authentically myself. I am unlikely to be affected by the TRAD Act, but many of my transgender siblings, especially those of color, may be. This act just requires that we do no more harm to those who are incarcerated than the criminal law requires. It simply protects those who are transgender and caught up in the criminal justice system. It allows them to be respected for who they are. It allows us to be human in concern for other humans.

Anita Brown, Prince George's County

Peoples' need, and right, to be treated with dignity, respect, and safety don't go away when they enter the criminal justice system. Trans Americans face increased risk of assault, suicide, and discrimination in day to day life, and these inequalities do not go away if and when they enter the criminal justice system. Incarcerated trans people need a safe, inclusive, affirming environment, and this legislation helps make that possible. We do a disservice to everyone's rights when we only protect the rights of those that are sympathetic to the public eye. People in prison are still people, have rights, and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, and that goes for trans people as well.

Mike English, Montgomery County

All human beings deserve to be treated with respect and dignity under all circumstances!

Carol Stern, Montgomery County

Being trans shouldn't be a death sentence, and yet for many people, it is. Whatever a person has been convicted of, they have a right to safety and to have their gender respected. The TRAD Act is making sure that prisoners are not left behind in civil rights.

Helen Heinrich, Montgomery County

Transgender people deserve safety and dignity while incarcerated. No more Black trans people should be injured or die while in Central Booking or anywhere in Maryland.

Rachel Smith, Baltimore County

Trans, intersex, and non-binary people are still people. They should be treated with the same level of respect and dignity.

Emmett Heck, Anne Arundel County

Trans inmates are worthy of dignity and respect because we are all humans. Safety and agency should be provided to everyone.

Elizabeth Byler, Baltimore City

It's time to start treating all trans people as human beings and prison shouldn't be an even greater compromise to someone's safety than it already is. Protect all trans people.

Erika Franz, Anne Arundel County

As a healthcare provider, I'm well aware that records keeping and intake processes often do not support people's ability to self identify as trans or non-binary. Establishing these systems and then treating individuals in a safe and respectful way consistent with their identity is essential to protecting people's rights. The rights of incarcerated individuals must be protected by law to ensure consistent and safe procedures.

Elizabeth Bellinger, Baltimore City

Committing a crime doesn't negate gender identity.

Cassandra Cox, Washington County

Every human being deserves to be safe. It is cruel and inhumane to treat Trans people in a way that violates their safety and dignity. Trans people deserve respect and to be treated fairly.

Sara Lloyd, Talbot County

It is about human dignity and safety. As a state, we abolished the death penalty. Now we need to treat everyone with dignity and respect even to those that may not show it themselves. That is the sign of a true civilization.

Jamie Remolde, Howard County

All people, including those accused of or convicted of a crime, deserve basic dignity and respect. This means that transgender inmates should be housed in facilities that match their identities, and they should not be discriminated against or be afraid of violence being inflicted on them.

Please pass this law.

Rylie, Howard County

As if incarceration weren't punishment enough, trans folks suffer from discrimination and outright abuse at the hands of correctional officers and other inmates at higher rates than their cis counterparts (not to mention the added cruelty of racism and other forms of discrimination on top of transphobia). I support the TRAD Act for the purpose of reducing the amount of harm that trans people experience within the carceral system.

Alex Lane, Prince George's County

Transgender individuals are far more at risk of sexual assault and discrimination when incarcerated with people of their matching birth sex. This act would ensure the safety of transgender inmates which is the responsibility of the government.

Bryan Bolesta, Howard County

I support the TRAD act because trans and nonbinary people deserve the same humanity and respect as everyone else. The penal system in MD and the larger United States is harsh and discriminatory as it is. The least that can be done is ensure that people are not placed into even worse conditions because their gender identity is not respected. I am proud that MD continues to pave the way for trans rights and I hope that TRAD can set a standard that other states can follow.

Sophie Chang, Montgomery County

People deserve respect - even when incarcerated. The instances of rape when a person is locked up in the wrong facility for them are alarming. Give people the respect they deserve.

Kay Schuyler, Baltimore County

Trans Americans face danger and discrimination in their everyday lives just because of who they are. I've seen it happen to those close to me, and even that pales in comparison to what many others deal with. This risk and hate doesn't go away if and when they enter the criminal justice system either. Just like we need to assert and protect their rights in the "outside world" we need to ensure that trans prisoners have their safety, identity, and dignity respected just like anyone else.

Mike, Montgomery County

I am a lifelong resident of Maryland, at almost 32 years old. I am transgender, specifically Agender. While I believe the entire incarceration system needs an overhaul and a change, and that every prisoner deserves dignity and their humanity acknowledged for the better of society, trans people are especially vulnerable to mal-treatment by the prison system. Maryland has been a safe state and has been ahead of the curve for non-imprisoned trans people, and that protection and dignity should extend to our incarcerated siblings as well.

Battison Easter, Harford County

As a society, we must be better than allowing institutional, systemic discrimination of transgender and other LGBTQ inmates. Passing this bill would take an important step toward needed protections for all people in the state's correctional system.

Carl Graziano, Howard County