



Trans Maryland  
1800 E Northern Parkway #66332  
Baltimore MD 21239

**House Bill # 553 Family Law - Fundamental Parental Rights**  
House Judiciary Committee  
February 15, 2024  
**Position: Oppose**

Trans Maryland is a multi-racial, multi-gender community power building organization for Maryland's trans community. In that capacity we work with young LGBTQIA+ people all across the state, and their families.

We understand the importance of supporting parents. In our capacity we hear from a lot of transgender and queer parents whose families are not provided space in our society to thrive. These parents and guardians deserve the same right to be acknowledged for who they are as cisgender and heterosexual parents. However, bills such as this one have no such goal. Bills like this are an effort to establish only a few parental experiences as valid, and pretend that families with trans and queer heads of household do not exist.

Our students must be taught about the existence of trans and queer people to prevent harm, discrimination, and violence, to learn about their fellow classmates, neighboring families, faculty, historical persons of note, and legislators in service of the betterment of our society. UNICEF states that "children are individuals, children are neither the possessions of parents nor of the state, nor are they mere people-in-the-making; they have equal status as members of the human family." UNICEF also states "Social research findings show that children's earliest experiences significantly influence their future development. The course of their development determines their contribution, or cost, to society over the course of their lives." What more costs will the queer and trans youth of Maryland bear if their government yields to those who seek to remove queer and trans youth and adults from public life? What costs will cisgender and heterosexual youth charge to our society if they are opted out of information about members of a vulnerable, marginalized group?

From the GLSEN 2019 National School Climate Survey, we know that Maryland schools were not safe for most LGBTQ+ secondary school students. 24% of Maryland's LGBTQ youth surveyed had experienced physical harassment, 12% had experienced physical assault, and 67% had experienced verbal harassment ([2019 National School Climate Survey, GLSEN](#)). Almost one quarter of surveyed Maryland LGBTQ youth experienced physical harassment, which is an unacceptable level of violence in our Maryland Public Schools. When we endeavor to improve the culture of violence against LGBTQIA+ people in our society by reducing those numbers, we know that education is key. Opting out of learning about the existence of this community is a pathway to continued violence, and is fundamentally out of alignment with acknowledging the inherent dignity of transgender and queer youth and families.

For more information, contact Lee Blinder, Executive Director of Trans Maryland at [lee@transmaryland.org](mailto:lee@transmaryland.org)



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We are watching attacks on the freedom of access to information in jurisdictions all over the country, and legislation like this is a part of that coordinated effort. A core challenge to an informed, knowledgeable, and proactive populace is to limit information and access to education about all families.

We understand that fear of those who are different is a factor here, and efforts like these serve to drive a wedge to attempt to establish who can be reflected in the well-researched, and well-vetted literature and materials that are available to our young people. We are interested in an open society that allows for and celebrates a public school education that includes the broadly diverse communities that make up our state, so we can fulfill the goal of Governor Moore's administration to "leave no one behind".

For these reasons **we urge an unfavorable report on this Bill # HB 553.**

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