

# Ezra Towne

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## **Favorable Testimony on Bill HB0785: Freedom to Read Act**

February 19, 2024

Chair Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, and esteemed members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I write to you today as a transmasculine nonbinary adult invested in the well-being of transgender and nonbinary library users in the state of Maryland. I am also a facilitator of a trans-led peer support group in Montgomery County. **My testimony on this bill is favorable, and I urge you to move this bill promptly through committee with a favorable vote.**

HB0785 would establish state standards for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ (and other controversial) books in libraries that receive state funding. The bill also would alter some of the aspects of the currently existing state library committees to account for the additional work and funding to ensure that our libraries are as inclusive as possible - for all residents of Maryland.

I am currently 49 years old. If more resources had been available to me in state and local libraries, and in school libraries, I would have been much much younger than 42 when I realized that there was a word for someone like me - a nonbinary individual who doesn't identify as female or male, but somewhere in between. I would have undergone physical transition to match my internal gender identity with what the world perceives about my gender.

I would also have been a much happier teenager and young adult, rather than the depressed and suicidal person that I once was. If there had simply been any media at all that covered trans and/or nonbinary gender identities was back then, I would have seen people like myself thriving as their authentic selves.

I applaud the Ways and Means committee for hearing this bill, considering it's full impact, and working to move the bill onto the House floor via a favorable report.

Transgender and nonbinary Marylanders deserve to see themselves represented in the literature and other media at our libraries - just as much as any other person does. **I ask the committee for a favorable report on HB0785, the Freedom to Read Act, so that the bill moves promptly to the House of Delegates for a full vote.**

Sincerely,



Ezra Towne  
District 18