

Bill: HB 050 Commission on History, Culture, & Civics in Education

Position: FAVORABLE

am submitting this testimony in FAVOR of HB 50. I am a professor in the University System of Maryland, serve on the Governor's Commission of LGBTQIA+ Affairs, am on the board of PFLAG Salisbury, and am a parent. HB 50 would provide access to education that is inclusive of LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) people, history, culture, and perspectives. LGBTQ+ youth are unlikely to be taught these topics at home. According to research, less than 20% of high school students are taught positive representations of LGBTQ+ people, history, or events at school. And, roughly the same percentage of youth learn about LGBTQ+ people in a negative way. Learning about LGBTQ+ history and people is beneficial for all students, providing deeper contextual information. For instance, Eleanor Roosevelt's letter correspondence with journalist Lorena Hickok is easier to interpret if aware that the two had a romantic relationship. Integrating LGBTQ+ history into existing curricula is not complicated, as many historical LGBTQ+ figures are already taught in school. LGBTQ+ students, in particular, are likely to benefit from this type of education. Research finds LGBTQ+ inclusive education improves school climate and LGBTQ+ students who attend schools with inclusive curricula report their school climate as more supportive and as safer, experience less harassment, and have greater self-esteem. These factors subsequently reduce the likelihood that students will skip school, and increase their GPA and likelihood of going to college. I support HB 50 and recommend a FAVORABLE report in committee.