



**Maryland Commission
on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

Bill Title: Children - Parental Rights - Educational Rights

Bill Number(s): [HB1385/SB948](#)

Position: UNFAVORABLE

Date: March 3, 2025

Submitted by: Jeremy Browning, Director of the
Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

To:

House Ways and Means Committee

The Hon. Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair
The Hon. Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Vice Chair

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

The Hon. Brian J. Feldman, Chair
The Hon. Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair

Testimony on behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs:

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, created by the Maryland General Assembly, works to serve LGBTQIA+ Marylanders by galvanizing community voices, researching and addressing challenges, and advocating for policies that advance equity and inclusion. The Commission envisions a Maryland where all LGBTQIA+ people can live full and authentic lives. As a vital resource, the Commission collaborates with public officials, agencies, and community partners to ensure the rights and dignity of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders are protected and respected.

The Commission strongly opposes HB1385 and SB948. While we recognize the importance of parental involvement in education, this bill introduces provisions that would harm LGBTQIA+ students by restricting their ability to express themselves safely in schools. Research consistently shows that LGBTQIA+ students already face disproportionate levels of bullying, harassment, and mental health challenges in school settings. Reports such as the [2021 GLSEN National School Climate Survey](#) and the [GLSEN 2021 Maryland State Snapshot](#) confirm that many LGBTQIA+ students in Maryland encounter hostile environments that contribute to higher rates of absenteeism, lower academic performance, and increased suicide risk.

A particularly dangerous provision in this bill mandates that schools obtain parental consent before a student can use gender pronouns that do not align with their assigned sex at birth. This requirement fails to consider the reality that not all students have supportive parents. For many

transgender and nonbinary youth, being forcibly outed at school could lead to rejection, emotional or physical abuse, and even homelessness.

[The Trevor Project's 2023 National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People](#)

analyzed the experiences of more than 28,000 LGBTQ young people ages 13 to 24 across the United States. Key findings include:

- Nearly 2 in 3 LGBTQ young people said that hearing about potential state or local laws banning people from discussing LGBTQ people at school made their mental health a lot worse.
- A majority of LGBTQ young people reported being verbally harassed at school because people thought they were LGBTQ.
- 41% of LGBTQ young people seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.
- Roughly half of transgender and nonbinary young people found their school to be gender-affirming, and those who did reported lower rates of attempting suicide.
- Fewer than 40% of LGBTQ young people found their home to be LGBTQ-affirming.
- 24% of LGBTQ young people and 27% of transgender and nonbinary young people reported that they have been physically threatened or harmed in the past year due to their gender identity.

In addition to the risks of forced disclosure, this bill's broad parental opt-out provisions for school clubs, instructional materials, and presentations open the door to censorship of LGBTQIA+ content. LGBTQIA+ students deserve to see themselves reflected in their education, and policies like these disproportionately harm students from marginalized backgrounds by restricting their access to affirming and inclusive learning environments.

Further, HB1385/SB948 place an undue burden on educators by requiring them to disclose information about students' mental health, extracurricular involvement, and other personal matters to parents, regardless of whether doing so is in the best interest of the student. Schools should be places where students feel safe to seek support, not environments where they fear being exposed without their consent.

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs urges the legislature to reject this bill. Schools must be safe and affirming spaces where all students can learn and thrive without fear of discrimination or forced disclosure. HB1385 and SB948 fail to balance parental involvement with student well-being, instead creating a framework that could harm Maryland's most vulnerable youth. For these reasons, we strongly urge an unfavorable report on HB1385 and SB948 .

References:

GLSEN. (2022). *The 2021 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in our nation's schools*. Retrieved from <https://www.glsen.org/research/2021-national-school-climate-survey>

GLSEN. (2023, February). *2021 National School Climate Survey: Maryland State Snapshot*. Retrieved from https://maps.glsen.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/GLSEN_2021_NSCS_State_Snapshots_MD.pdf

The Trevor Project. (2023). *The 2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People*. Retrieved from https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2023/assets/static/05_TREVOR05_2023survey.pdf