

Senate Bill 948
Children - Parental Rights - Educational Rights
March 7, 2025
Unfavorable

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee -

The Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition (TRAC) is a Maryland-led group of organizations, health care providers, and advocates seeking to improve the wellbeing of transgender Marylanders and ensure health equity across the state. TRAC has led legislative efforts to ensure the safety and well being of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders, including transgender students. Governor Moore's executive order declaring Maryland a Trans Sanctuary State, as well as bills providing and protecting gender affirming medical care, demonstrate clear support for the health and well being of transgender Marylanders.

TRAC strongly **opposes SB 948** which threatens the well being of transgender students by requiring forcible outing of transgender students, as well as the erasure of LGBTQIA+ youth from health education when requested by parents. Research shows that forced outings have demonstrable negative health effects on transgender youth, and that health education that is inclusive of gender identity and sexual orientation is beneficial for the well being of LGBTQIA+ and cisgender students.

Forced Outing

Schools are often safer spaces for transgender students, who make up 2% of the population of 13-17 year olds in Maryland.¹ Transgender students often elect to use chosen names and pronouns reflecting their gender identity at school before sharing this information at home. A 2022 survey by the Trevor Project found that 51% of trans youth considered school a safe space, while only 32% felt safe at home.²

HB 1385 requires schools to seek parental consent to use a transgender student's chosen pronouns, which would result in forced outing, or sharing a student's gender before they elect to do so. The forced outing in HB 1385 is contrary to federal privacy law that protects students' transgender status and gender assigned at birth.³

Forced outing also creates serious health risks for transgender students, who already disproportionately face discriminatory policies or practices at their schools.^{4,5} Transgender youth who disclose their gender identity face risk of rejection from the adults who are supposed to care for them, leading to increased

¹ [UCLA Williams Institute](#)

² [Trevor Project 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health](#)

³ [ACLU Student Rights](#)

⁴ [UCLA Williams Institute](#)

⁵ [GLSEN 2021 School Climate Study](#)

⁶ [Trevor Project 2024 National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People](#)



suicide risk and substance misuse.⁷ Transgender people are much more likely to suffer abuse based on their gender identity from their families.⁸ Familial abuse and rejection leads to transgender youth being disproportionately represented in foster care homes, juvenile detention centers, and homeless shelters.⁹¹⁰¹¹

Forcing students to hide their gender identities at school to protect themselves would also cause significant harm. A study in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* found that transgender students who are unable to use their preferred name and pronouns at school were 29% more likely to consider suicide and 56% more likely to exhibit suicidal behavior.¹²

Inclusive Health Education Censorship

SB 948 would also enable parents to opt their children out of health education that includes LGBTQIA+ people. Health curriculums that include gender identity and sexual orientation are well studied and proven to positively impact the lives of LGBTQIA+ students. For example, a study in the *Journal of School Nursing* found that sexual minority students who received decidedly heteronormative and exclusive sex education demonstrate higher levels of anxiety.¹³ Another study published in *Journal of Adolescent Health* shows that students in states with a greater proportion of LGBTQIA+ inclusive sex education have lower odds of experiencing school-based victimization and adverse mental health.

Additionally, leading medical organizations also support inclusive health education. For example, the American Medical Association Health Education policy urges schools at all education levels to implement comprehensive, developmentally appropriate sexuality education programs that appropriately and

⁷ [Family Rejection as a Predictor of Suicide Attempts and Substance Misuse Among Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Adults](#) Augustus Klein and Sarit A. Golub *LGBT Health* 2016 3:3, 193-199

⁸ [“Transgender Intimate Partner Violence and Gender Identity Abuse.”](#) MedCentral, 22 Feb. 2022,

⁹ Trevor Project [Homelessness and Housing Insecurity Among LGBTQ Youth](#)

¹⁰ [UNJUST: LGBTQ Youth Incarcerated in the Juvenile Justice System](#)

¹¹ [Experiences and Well-Being of Sexual and Gender Diverse Youth in Foster Care in New York City](#)

¹² [Chosen Name Use Is Linked to Reduced Depressive Symptoms, Suicidal Ideation, and Suicidal Behavior Among Transgender Youth](#) Russell, Stephen T. et al. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Volume 63, Issue 4, 503 - 505

¹³ Epps B, Markowski M, Cleaver K. [A Rapid Review and Narrative Synthesis of the Consequences of Non-Inclusive Sex Education in UK Schools on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Young People](#). *J Sch Nurs*. 2023 Feb;39(1):87-97.



comprehensively address the sexual behavior of all people, inclusive of sexual and gender minorities.¹⁴ The American Psychological Association advises that inclusive curriculums benefit all youth, including cisgender and straight students, improving school climates and healthy relationships for everyone.¹⁵

The hostile political environment created by the federal administration has rapidly worsened the discrimination against LGBTQIA+ students in Maryland. Forcibly outing transgender students would critically impact the health and well being of these vulnerable young Marylanders. It's essential for the health, well being, and academic success of LGBTQ+ students that they are protected and included in the health curriculum in Maryland. **The Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition strongly urges an unfavorable report on SB 948.**

¹⁴ [AMA Health Education Policy](#) (2024)

¹⁵ [APA statement on inclusive curriculum](#) American Psychological Association recommend LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum, including sex education.