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Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Monday, February 10, 2025

SB350 – Primary and Secondary Education - Educator Professional
Development - Course on Student Well-Being and Flourishing

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Esteemed Members of the Education,
Energy, and the Environment:

My name is Ronnie L. Taylor, and I serve as the Community Advocacy
Manager at FreeState Justice, a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing
legal and systemic inequities affecting Maryland's LGBTQIA+ community. I
advocate in strong support of **SB0350**, which mandates the development of a
professional development course on student well-being and flourishing for
educators.

SB0350 addresses a critical need in our education system by equipping school
personnel with the tools to support the comprehensive well-being of all
students, including those from marginalized communities. Data indicates that
LGBTQIA+ students in Maryland face significant challenges:

- Approximately 50% of LGBTQ+ students in Maryland report being verbally harassed due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- 52% of LGBTQ youth in Maryland who sought mental health care in the past year were unable to access it.

These statistics underscore the urgency of implementing comprehensive well-being programs in schools.

SB0350 requires the Maryland State Department of Education to develop a continuing professional development course focusing on the eight dimensions of well-being as identified by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): social, environmental, physical, emotional, spiritual, occupational, intellectual, and financial.

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By educating school personnel on these dimensions, the bill aims to:


1. **Enhance Social Well-Being:** Foster inclusive classroom environments where all students feel a sense of belonging.
2. **Promote Emotional Well-Being:** Equip educators with strategies to support students in expressing their feelings and coping with stressors.
3. **Support Physical Well-Being:** Encourage healthy habits through informed pedagogical approaches.
4. **Cultivate Intellectual Well-Being:** Stimulate lifelong learning and personal interests among students.

Implementing this course will empower educators to create supportive learning environments, thereby improving educational outcomes for LGBTQIA+ students and others facing adversity.

In my role at FreeState Justice, I have encountered numerous LGBTQIA+ students who face discrimination and a lack of support within educational settings. For instance, many students have reported feeling unsafe at school due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, leading to increased absenteeism and declining academic performance.

I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for **SB0350**. This legislation is a vital step toward fostering an educational environment that prioritizes the well-being of all students, particularly those from marginalized communities. By equipping educators with the necessary tools and knowledge, we can ensure that every student in Maryland can thrive.

Best,



Ronnie L. Taylor

Sources:

1. [Recommendations-to-Support-LGBTQIA-Students-APPROVED.pdf](#)
2. [The-Trevor-Project-2022-National-Survey-on-LGBTQ-Youth-Mental-Health-by-State-Maryland.pdf](#)
3. [Creating a Healthier Life: A Step-By-Step Guide to Wellness | SAMHSA Publications and Digital Products](#)