

SUPPORT SJ0003--Diversity, Equity and Inclusion-The American Dream

SJ0003 affirms Maryland's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) as a foundation of the American Dream; and encourages certain individuals and groups to adopt and uphold DEI principles. Hearing in the Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee on 3/13/25

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

I reside in Anne Arundel County and I am writing on behalf of the Coalition for LGBTQ+ Students. **We strongly SUPPORT SJ0003** and we urge you to give it a favorable report.

The mission of the Coalition for LGBTQ+ Students is to provide advocacy and support to youth in the LGBTQIA community in Anne Arundel County and beyond. Our Coalition understands the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion and we believe SJ0003 deserves your unqualified support. This is especially important today, given the harmful, wide-spread attacks on LGBTQIA youth and other marginalized groups in the United States and the efforts to eradicate DEI from all our institutions.

Communities that uphold principles of diversity, inclusion, and equity are stronger, richer and function more effectively. DEI principles empower us to share our experiences and opinions freely, without having to fear backlash and marginalization. This freedom of expression leads to enhanced problem-solving, creativity, collaboration and innovation. It means everyone in the room can experience a sense of belonging and a feeling that they matter. DEI means that all people have legitimate and valuable contributions to make which strengthens our communities. DEI leads to increased understanding of others which leads to greater empathy and compassion. DEI helps us to be better prepared for the global world we inhabit, by enhancing our knowledge of cultures that are different from our own. We all benefit when we incorporate DEI into our institutions.

Maryland lawmakers need to explicitly support the principles of DEI because they are under brutal attack. Lawmakers and political leaders at the highest level of government are doing their best to outlaw DEI. They claim that DEI is “divisive” and they engage in dangerous fear-mongering and manipulative lies to try to eradicate DEI. Obviously, DEI principles aren’t divisive, as they are based on the notion that all people should be included, respected and valued. DEI counters the dangerous notion that any one race, gender, sexual orientation, religion or culture is superior and should dominate others.

People in marginalized communities, including the LGBTQIA community, are terrified by the current attacks on DEI by our government. They know first-hand how dangerous these types of

attacks can be. They know that without DEI principles, those in marginalized communities quickly lose basic human rights, including the right to raise children, marry, obtain health care and serve in the military. These are dangerous times for many people. People are frightened and feel vulnerable. We need your help.

Our Coalition asks you to make a clear statement that Maryland is fully committed to supporting DEI in our communities, including in our workplaces, educational systems and government.

Please SUPPORT SJ0003

Sincerely,

Abbie M. Ellicott
Representing the Coalition for LGBTQ+ Students
Severna Park, Anne Arundel County, Maryland