



LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **SB588/HB0156 Education - Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity and Varsity Teams - Designation Based on Sex (Fairness In Girls' Sports Act)**

Organization: PFLAG Salisbury Inc., PO Box 5107, Salisbury Maryland 21802

Submitted by: Dr. Nicole Hollywood, Board Member

Position: **OPPOSE**

SALISBURY PFLAG STRONGLY OPPOSES DISCRIMINATION IN SPORTS

This testimony in OPPOSITION of **SB588** is being submitted on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury, an organization dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQIA+ people and their families.

SB588 is a misguided bill rooted in transphobia that is simply not backed by the scientific research. If this bill passes it will be a form of state-censored intolerance and legislators who support this bill will be on the wrong side of history and forever mired in the bog of bigotry. Bills such as these are being used as a way to discriminate against transgender Americans opening the door to the humiliating treatment of any, and all, youth who don't fit culturally-accepted gender norms.

Simply put, SB588 is discriminatory, not rooted in science, runs contrary to the purpose of youth sports, and is publicly opposed by all our nation's most renowned medical, psychological, and child development professional organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychological Association. Further, this bill goes directly against the guidance of the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) whose policy states - "participation should provide for the opportunity for all students to participate in interscholastic athletics in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on a student's academic record."

According to COMAR 13A.01.04.03 "All students in Maryland's public schools without exception have a right to educational environments that are safe, appropriate for academic achievement, and free from ANY form of harassment."

In 2014, the State of Maryland prohibited discrimination based on gender identity and expression with regard to public accommodations, housing, and employment in the Fairness for All Marylanders Act of 2014.

SB588 encourages adults, children, and parents to ostracize, isolate, and discriminate against trans and gender non-conforming youth and provides protections for individuals who report and draw attention to suspected TGNC youth as well as opportunities for individuals who feel "harmed" by the presence of TGNC youth to seek civil action.

The attention and debate caused by bills such as SB588 is shown to have a deleterious impact on LGBTQIA+ youth. According to Free State Justice -"This onslaught of anti-trans legislation can bring on feelings of ennui or weltschmerz that reality will never reach an individual's expectations of the life they want and deserve." According to the ACLU, "there is no one way for women's bodies to be. Women, including women who are transgender, intersex, or disabled, have a range of different physical characteristics. A person's sex is made up of multiple biological characteristics and they may not all align as typically male or female in a given person. Further, many people who are not trans can have hormones levels outside of the range considered typical of a cis person of their assigned sex."

Gender is a spectrum and not all individuals identify or present as male or female. Transgender people are our beloved friends and family, co-workers, neighbors, students, community members, children, and parents. Being transgender is not the whole of anyone's identity because gender identity is just one small piece of who one is as an individual.

Transgender athletes participate in sports for the same reasons as everyone else—to get and stay healthy, be part of a team, and build a sense of belonging with their peers. Many who oppose the inclusion of trans athletes erroneously claim that allowing trans athletes to compete will harm cisgender women but excluding transgender and gender non-conforming students hurts all students.

Denying transgender youth access to athletic programs is discrimination. It is regressive and unjust and not in line with our moniker as the Free State. PFLAG Salisbury Inc. strongly opposes this legislation and recommends an UNFAVORABLE report in committee.