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March 10, 2025

TO: The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Adam Spangler
Legislative Aide, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: House Bill 1129 – Constitutional Officers – Gender–Neutral Language–
Support

The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) urges the Committee to give **House Bill 1129** a favorable report. The proposed constitutional amendment aims to implement gender-neutral language concerning constitutional officers in the Maryland Constitution. This amendment represents an important step towards inclusivity and equality within our state's governing documents.

The language we use matters; it shapes our perception of roles and individuals within our society. By adopting gender-neutral terminology, we acknowledge and respect the diverse identities of all Marylanders. This is not the first time that Maryland has adopted gender neutral language. The Maryland Gender Neutral Reference in the Maryland Constitution Amendment, also known as Question 1, was on the November 2, 1982 ballot in Maryland as a legislatively referred constitutional amendment, where it was approved by nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of voters. The measure replaced gender specific reference in the Maryland Constitution with a gender neutral reference pertaining to imprisonment for debt.¹

Furthermore, this initiative aligns with similar efforts undertaken in various states, emphasizing the importance of language in legislative processes. Currently nine state

¹ Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, "Referenda Elections for Maryland 1968-1990,"

constitutions use gender neutral language.² By supporting **House Bill 1129**, we can position Maryland as a leader in promoting gender equality and inclusiveness.

This amendment not only modernizes our Constitution but also ensures that it reflects the values of fairness and equality that we aspire to uphold as a society. For the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Attorney General urges the Committee to report **House Bill 1129** favorably.

cc: The Honorable Delegate Dana Jones
Health and Government Operations Committee Members

² *South Dakota Constitutional Amendment E, gender-neutral Constitutional Language Amendment (2024)*. Ballotpedia. (n.d.). [https://ballotpedia.org/South_Dakota_Constitutional_Amendment_E,_Gender-Neutral_Constitutional_Language_Amendment_\(2024\)#Gender-specific_language_in_state_constitutions](https://ballotpedia.org/South_Dakota_Constitutional_Amendment_E,_Gender-Neutral_Constitutional_Language_Amendment_(2024)#Gender-specific_language_in_state_constitutions)