

HJ0004 / SJ0005 Elementary and Secondary Education-Curriculum-Importance of Diversity

March 6, 2025

Dear Chair Healy and Vice Chair Holmes and Members of the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee:

My name is Bethany Brand and I reside in 43B in Baltimore County. I am a parent and a clinical psychologist. I **strongly support SJ0005** because, as a mother and Professor at Towson University for 25 years, I understand the importance of teaching a culturally diverse curriculum in elementary and secondary schools in Maryland. Our schools much make all children and families feel comfortable, safe, and seen.

I am also the mother of a trans son who is 24 years old. I recall how incredibly painful it was for my son to be seen and treated as a girl and to have some teachers refuse to call him by his chosen name once he came out as trans. As we, his parents, allowed him to begin to use his chosen name and to socially transition, we saw the depression and anxiety he had been struggling with for years improve. He had a few teachers who were supportive of him; the school worked to create a gender neutral bathroom for him and other trans students. Feeling seen, supported and safe at school is crucial for children's well-being and learning. I saw it first-hand with my son, and being trans is only one type of diversity that is crucial to support.

Please support this bill so our schools can continue to make children from diverse backgrounds feel supported, and so that other children learn to value diversity. Our country urgently needs appreciation for diversity, not lies and fear mongering about people who are different.

Please help keep Maryland's educational systems complete and supportive for all its residents!

Thank you,

Bethany Brand