

House Ways and Means Committee

January 29, 2025

House Bill 156

Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity and Varsity Teams – Designation Based on Sex

*****OPPOSE*****


On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD), I write to express our strong opposition to House Bill 156: *Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity and Varsity Teams – Designation Based on Sex*.

This proposed legislation is part of a growing wave of harmful anti-LGBTQ+ and, more specifically, anti-transgender rhetoric that is being pushed across the country. These efforts are designed to foster division, promote disinformation, and create a hostile environment for transgender individuals. We are deeply concerned that HB 156 contributes to a broader pattern of discrimination and dehumanization, which directly threatens the well-being and rights of transgender people in our state.

Anti-trans sports bills like HB 156 do more than just restrict access to athletic opportunities; they lay the groundwork for a culture of exclusion, segregation, and social ostracism. These bills undermine basic principles of fairness, equity, and human dignity—values that are essential to Maryland’s diverse and inclusive communities.

As social workers, we know the profound impact that laws like HB 156 can have on mental health. Transgender individuals in our state already face disproportionately high rates of depression, anxiety, trauma, and suicidal ideation. Legislation that targets their identity and seeks to invalidate their experiences only exacerbates these challenges. Conversely, policies that promote inclusion and safety can have a transformative effect on their well-being.

Marylanders have already demonstrated their commitment to inclusivity through landmark legislation such as the Trans Health Equity Act. This bill reflects the values of compassion, respect, and equity that we hold dear. HB 156 is in direct contradiction to these values and would set a harmful precedent for discriminatory policies that have no place in our state.



As social workers, we also know that Maryland has urgent challenges that require our collective attention and resources. We must focus on addressing systemic disparities, such as racial and socioeconomic inequities, the opioid crisis, affordable housing shortages, and the ongoing fight to end the HIV epidemic. It is critical that we prioritize laws and policies that strengthen, rather than divide, our communities.

Rather than engaging in divisive and harmful rhetoric, we urge you to dedicate your efforts to the long-term solutions that will heal our communities and ensure all Marylanders have the opportunity to thrive.

We respectfully urge you to oppose HB 156 and to stand in support of the dignity, rights, and well-being of transgender Marylanders.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Karessa Proctor, BSW, MSW
Executive Director, NASW Maryland Chapter