



House Bill 495
Education - Antidiscrimination Policies - Policy
and Notice Requirements
February 12, 2025
Favorable

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

The Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition (TRAC) is a Maryland-led group of organizations, health care providers, and advocates seeking to improve the wellbeing of transgender Marylanders and ensure health equity across the state. TRAC has led legislative efforts to ensure the safety and well being of LGBTQIA+ Marylanders, including transgender students. Governor Moore’s executive order declaring Maryland a Trans Sanctuary State, as well as bills providing and protecting gender affirming medical care, demonstrate clear support for the health and well being of transgender Marylanders.

TRAC strongly supports HB 495 which requires robust, accessible antidiscrimination policies and training in Maryland’s schools. This bill is necessary for the health and well being of transgender students in Maryland, who face serious challenges at school. Research proves that antidiscrimination policies protect LGBTQIA+ students and education associations support these policies.

Transgender youth (aged 13-17) make up 2% of the population in Maryland, but they disproportionately face discriminatory policies or practices at their schools.¹²³ A 2021 study of LGBTQIA+ students by the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) found that almost half (45.9%) experienced at least one form of anti-LGBTQIA+ discrimination at school.⁴ The 2022 US Trans Survey found that nearly two-thirds of 16 and 17 years olds who were out or perceived as trans experienced mistreatment. This mistreatment includes verbal harassment, physical attacks, online bullying, being denied the ability to dress according to their gender identity/expression, teachers or staff refusing to use chosen name or pronouns, or being denied the use of restrooms or locker rooms matching their gender identity.”⁵

¹ [UCLA Williams Institute](#)

² [GLSEN 2021 School Climate Study](#)

³ [Trevor Project 2024 National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ Young People](#)

⁴ [GLSEN School Climate for LGBTQ+ Students in Maryland \(2021\)](#)

⁵ James, S.E., Herman, J.L., Durso, L.E., & Heng-Lehtinen, R. (2024). [Early Insights: A Report of the 2022 U.S. Transgender Survey](#). National Center for Transgender Equality, Washington, DC.



The effects of discrimination are significant and life-threatening. The GLSEN study found that students who experienced anti-LGBTQIA+ discrimination at school were nearly three times as likely to have missed school in the past month and had lower GPAs than their peers.⁶ And the vast majority of LGBTQIA+ students (83%) experienced harassment or assault at school.⁷ Alarming, a 2022 study found that *49% of transgender and nonbinary youth seriously contemplated suicide, 73% experienced anxiety, and 60% experienced depression in the past year.*⁸

The Survey Results from the 2021 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Youth Risk Behavior Survey, in which Maryland participated, also showed that LGBTQIA+ students are experiencing alarming rates of violence, poor mental health, and suicidal thoughts and behaviors.⁹ In response to these issues, the *Maryland Safe and Supportive Schools for All* report, released last year by the Maryland State Department of Education and Board of Education, includes suggestions for educators to create safe schools for LGBTQIA+ students.¹⁰ While the report provides guidance and assistance to schools in developing inclusive curriculum, affirming environment and nondiscriminatory practices, ***it does not require non-discrimination policies.***

Research shows that antidiscrimination policies are effective in protecting the safety and well being of students. Laws protecting LGBTQIA+ students from discrimination reduce bullying and increase student grades.¹¹ LGBTQIA+ students in schools with a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy were less likely to be bullied, less likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe, more likely to have staff intervene when harassed, and more likely to feel a part of the school community.¹²

The hostile political environment created by the federal administration has rapidly worsened the discrimination against LGBTQIA+ students in Maryland. It's essential for the health, well being, and academic success of LGBTQIA+ students that they are protected by antidiscrimination policies at school. **The Trans Rights Advocacy Coalition strongly urges a favorable report on HB 495.**

⁶ [NSCS 2021 Executive Summary](#) and [GLSEN School Climate for LGBTQ+ Students in Maryland \(2021\)](#)

⁷ [GLSEN NSCS 2021 Full Report](#)

⁸ [Trevor Project 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ+ Mental Health in Maryland](#)

⁹ [2023 CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results](#)

¹⁰ [Maryland Safe and Supportive Schools for All Students: Creating Inclusive Spaces for LGBTQIA+ Youth \(2024\)](#)

¹¹ Xavier Fields & Christine Min Wotipka (2020): Effect of LGBT anti-discrimination laws on school climate and outcomes for lesbian, gay, and bisexual high school students, Journal of LGBT Youth, [DOI: 10.1080/19361653.2020.1821276](#)

¹² [GLSEN School Climate for LGBTQ+ Students in Maryland \(2021\)](#)