



TESTIMONY OPPOSED TO HB 0156:

****UNFAVORABLE****

**Education—Interscholastic and Intramural Junior Varsity
and Varsity Teams—Designation Based on Sex
(Fairness in Girls' Sports Act)**

TO: Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair, Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Vice Chair and the members of the House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Rev. Linda K. Boyd, Co-Chair, Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network, Diocese of Maryland

DATE: January 29, 2025

The Episcopal Church and the Maryland Episcopal Diocese believe that God is love, and that God's love extends to all LGBTQ+ people. The Episcopal Church sees all people as children of God, each deserving equal dignity and respect, with no exceptions. All are part of God's plan for us. We advocate for the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in all aspects of society. Surveys show that LGBTI+ individuals experience significantly higher rates of discrimination than non-LGBTI+ individuals, including anti-LGBTQ+ legislation such as HB 156.. Such discrimination has substantial adverse effects on their economic, physical and mental well-being.

A transgender person is someone whose sex assigned at birth is different from who they know they are on the inside. There has been considerable disinformation and misinformation about what the inclusion of transgender youth entails. Actually, transgender students in sports has been a non-issue. Enactment of this law would impose burdensome and/or invasive requirements, including traumatic and age-inappropriate medical exams to examine "internal or external genitalia, expensive and extraordinary DNA testing, bloodwork for hormone levels or other ill-conceived and unscientific "gender" test. The entire premise of this bill is without substantiation and based on inaccurate assumptions. Natural variations in physical characteristics are an inherent part of sports, and especially so when young people are growing so rapidly. Playing sports helps young people maintain good physical health, build self-confidence and self-esteem, etc. Transgender youth experience all kinds of mistreatment because of their gender identity. Studies have found that high school-aged transgender student athletes reported higher grades, lower levels of depression, and were less likely to feel unsafe at school than those who did not play sports.

We respectfully request an unfavorable report.