

## **Testimony in Opposition to Maryland House Bill 282: "Education - Prohibition on Instructional Materials with Sexually Explicit Content"**

**To:** Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

**Date:** 1/13/2025

**Subject:** Opposition to HB 282 – Education – Prohibition on Instructional Materials with Sexually Explicit Content

Dear Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Josie Pines, and I am a resident of Maryland. I am writing to strongly oppose House Bill 282, which seeks to prohibit instructional materials containing sexually explicit content in schools. Let me be clear: I do not support sexually graphic materials being introduced into educational environments. No one wants that. However, I am deeply concerned about the subtext of this bill, which I believe is a thinly veiled attempt to target and stigmatize LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly queer and trans people, by associating our very existence with sexual immorality.

The language and intent behind this bill create a dangerous precedent, one that suggests that being gay or trans is inherently sexual. It implies that activities like holding hands, kissing, or simply existing in public as a queer person are somehow sexually explicit. Yet, when cisgender, heterosexual people engage in the same actions, they are not subjected to the same scrutiny. This glaring double standard is not lost on those of us who have lived under the weight of being told that we are inherently immoral or evil simply for existing. We are constantly told that our identities are nothing more than sexual deviations. And now, this bill seeks to codify that bias into law. It is an attempt to erase the validity of queer and trans lives by implying that our mere presence is somehow inappropriate or dangerous for children.

This bill, in its essence, is not about protecting children from explicit content; it is a calculated move to invalidate and marginalize a group of people. It is an attempt to erase the lives and identities of queer and trans individuals from the narrative of our communities, denying our right to exist freely and openly. You are framing the act of loving and being loved, of being seen as who we are, as inherently immoral, while ignoring the fact that heterosexual and cisgender individuals engage in the same behaviors without facing the same consequences. The real harm here is not the existence of LGBTQIA+ people in schools, but the demonization of our humanity.

Make no mistake: this is not just about books. This is about erasing us from the fabric of society, rendering us invisible and invalid. This is about silencing our voices and hiding our identities from the children who need to see and hear stories of people like them; people who are different but just as deserving of love, respect, and visibility. It is about making our existence something to be ashamed of, something that should be hidden in the dark corners of society.

This bill, and others like it, echo the tactics used in other states to push LGBTQIA+ people back into the closet. This is modern book burning. When governments begin censoring literature,

limiting the representation of queer and trans people, or outright banning discussions of our lives and experiences, they take the first steps down a path that has been walked before in darker times. History has shown us that the first thing to go in a fascist regime is the freedom of expression and individuality. It begins with the banning of books, the erasure of identities, and the marginalization of those who are seen as “different.”

We will not go back into the closet. We will not allow you to erase us. We will not stand by while you try to shame our children into hiding their identities or feeling that who they are is something to be ashamed of. LGBTQIA+ people are not immoral. We are not overtly sexual. We are human beings, deserving of the same dignity and respect as anyone else. Our identities are not inherently sexual or inappropriate for children. Our love is no different from anyone else's love, and our right to exist freely in public is not a threat to anyone.

I urge you to reject HB 282. We deserve a world where all people, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, are free to exist without fear of erasure, marginalization, or discrimination. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Josie Pines

A Concerned Trans Maryland Resident