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The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary
House Ways and Means Committee
130 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Testimony of Trans Maryland

IN OPPOSITION TO

HOUSE BILL #282: Housing and Community Development - Homeless Shelter Certification Program - Establishment

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

Trans Maryland is a multi-racial, multi-gender community power building organization for Maryland's trans community. In that capacity we work with young LGBTQIA+ people all across the state, and their families. We are watching attacks on the freedom of access to information in jurisdictions all over the country, and legislation like this is a part of that coordinated effort. A core challenge to an informed, knowledgeable, and proactive populace is to limit information and access to literature.

Media selections in public school libraries are carefully and intentionally curated to be age appropriate, and to ensure that our young people have access to information that reflects their whole selves. Many of our young people have not traditionally seen themselves represented in the literature that is included in our public school systems, and this bill is a response to well researched efforts to ensure our young people have a more positive experience in regards to representation. Bills like these are presented as efforts to protect our young people, however this is a thinly veiled effort to impose personal biases on all school age young people in the public school system.

Information is power, and every adult in this room had access to literature that is now being targeted for book bans bills like this one. Why would we want to leave our youth less well educated and with less access to information then we had? Isn't the goal for the next generation that they have access to more age appropriate information and resources then we had?

Book bans like House Bill 282 are also impossibly vague, leading to ridiculous and discriminatory results in the implementation. Similar bans have been passed in a number of states in recent years, and no matter how facially-neutral these laws are, implementation on the



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ground has focused almost entirely on books with LGBTQIA+ content, no matter how innocent or far from explicit they are. And when these laws are genuinely applied to everything equally, we see ridiculous results, such as in the recent case under a Texas law similar to House Bill 282, where school libraries were ordered to remove the Bible from their collections.

We understand that fear of those who are different is a factor here, and efforts like these serve to drive a wedge to attempt to establish who can be reflected in the well-researched, and well-vetted literature and materials that are available to our young people. We are interested in an open society that allows for and celebrates a public school education that includes the broadly diverse communities that make up our state, so we can fulfill the goal of Governor Moore's administration to "leave no one behind".

For these reasons **we urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 282.**