



**Maryland Commission  
on LGBTQIA+ Affairs**

**Bill Title:** Labor and Employment - Bereavement Leave  
- Qualified Relationships

**Bill Number(s):** HB1241

**Position:** FAVORABLE

**Date:** February 24, 2026

**Submitted by:** Director Jeremy Browning on behalf of  
the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs

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**To:**

**House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee**

The Hon. Melissa Wells, Chair  
The Hon. Kenneth Kerr, Vice Chair

**Testimony on behalf of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs:**

The Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, created by the Maryland General Assembly, works to assess challenges facing LGBTQIA+ Marylanders, elevate community voices, and inform policies that advance equity, safety, and well-being. The Commission envisions a Maryland where all LGBTQIA+ people are able to live full and authentic lives.

The Commission supports House Bill 1241, which allows employees to use earned leave to grieve the loss of an individual with whom they had a qualified relationship. By recognizing a broader range of meaningful relationships, this legislation reflects the realities of how many Marylanders experience family, care, and support.

For many LGBTQIA+ individuals, support networks extend beyond biological or legal family members. State-specific research from the Maryland Trans Survey found that the most common sources of support for transgender Marylanders were **friends (87%) and chosen family (70.1%)**, while fewer than half reported family of origin as a primary source of support, with even lower rates among transgender people of color.

These findings reflect the lived experience of many LGBTQIA+ Marylanders, particularly transgender and nonbinary individuals, who may rely on chosen family due to family rejection, geographic separation, or the need for affirming relationships.

Findings from the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs' 2026 Community Needs Assessment further underscore the importance of policies that support mental health and stability for LGBTQIA+ Marylanders. The assessment identified significant levels of stress,

discrimination, and mental health risk across the community, highlighting the need for workplace policies that support well-being during periods of major life disruption or loss.

When bereavement policies recognize only narrow definitions of “immediate family,” employees may be unable to take time to grieve the loss of the people who functioned as their primary support system. Research has shown that this type of unrecognized or unsupported loss, often described as disenfranchised grief, is associated with increased stress, depression, and prolonged grief.

HB1241 does not create new paid leave. Instead, it allows employees to use leave they have already earned to grieve the loss of individuals who played a significant role in their lives. By recognizing qualified relationships, the bill ensures that workplace policies reflect the diversity of family structures and lived experiences across Maryland’s workforce.

Supporting employees during times of loss promotes mental health, workplace stability, and economic security. For LGBTQIA+ Marylanders, particularly those who rely on chosen family networks, this recognition is an important step toward equitable and inclusive workplace policy.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs respectfully urges a favorable report on HB1241.

#### **References:**

Pease, M. V., Trovato, K. J., Clements, Z. A., & Galupo, M. P. (2025, January). *Social Support and Trans Communities in Maryland: Implications for Social Support and Bereavement Resources, Policies, and Practices*. Trans Maryland and the Queer/Trans Collective for Research on Equity & Wellness. <https://transmaryland.org/socialsupport>

Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs. (2026). *Maryland LGBTQIA+ Community Needs Assessment: Preliminary Findings Report*. <https://goci.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2026/02/2026-MDLGBTQIA-Community-Needs-Assessment-Preliminary-Findings-Report.pdf>