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February 18, 2026

**TO:** The Honorable William Smith  
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

**FROM:** Tiffany Clark  
Director, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

**RE:** Senate Bill 604 – Adoption, Foster Care, and Public Services - Prohibition  
Against Discrimination (Support in Concept)

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The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) supports in concept Senate Bill 604 – Adoption, Foster Care, and Public Services - Prohibition Against Discrimination. Senate Bill 604 would prohibit discrimination by local departments of social services, private child placement agencies, and service providers based on certain characteristics when considering prospective foster and adoptive parents, working with youth in foster care, or in delivering public services.

This legislation would codify some existing practices to ensure more consistency in how Maryland children and families are treated. Senate Bill 604 would add gender identity to the list of prohibited bases for discriminating against an applicant to a private child placement agency seeking to become a foster or adoptive parent. The bill would prohibit discrimination due to gender identity, sexual orientation, or marital status by local departments of social services or the Social Services Administration in working with prospective foster parents, current foster and adoptive parents, or youth in foster care. Senate Bill 604 also would add gender identity to the list of characteristics that may not be the basis for discrimination in employment or service delivery by any local department of social services, the Department of Human Services, or related state contractors.

This bill addresses two of our most important values - Marylanders' access to fair and equitable systems and promoting permanent families for our children. By removing undue obstacles for people to become parents and children to have families, this bill promotes a more

diverse and inclusive society for the benefit of us all. In our view, this bill creates an important safeguard for civil rights protections and ensures that the State consistently implements the principles that we value.

We appreciate the General Assembly's work on this and welcome the opportunity to share our perspective.

Cc: Members of the Committee