

SHORE PRIDE ALLIANCE LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **HB1011 Workgroup on Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse Students - Established**

Organization: Shore Pride Alliance., PO Box 5107, Salisbury Maryland 21802

Submitted by: Nicole Hollywood, Board Member

Position: **FAVORABLE**

This testimony is being submitted in FAVOR of HB 1011 on behalf of Shore Pride Alliance, formerly PFLAG Salisbury, an organization dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQIA+ people and their families.

Maryland has long been a leader in educational equity, but the reality for our transgender and gender-expansive youth remains fraught with challenges. This bill is a vital step toward ensuring every Maryland student can learn in an environment where they are seen, respected, and safe.

While some Maryland counties have made strides in supporting transgender and gender diverse students, the lack of a unified framework creates a zip code lottery for students where unfortunately learners from the Eastern Shore are at a deficit. Research from The Trevor Project's 2024 U.S. National Survey specifically highlights the urgency in Maryland whereas:

- 44% of transgender youth in Maryland seriously considered suicide in the past year.
- 18% of LGBTQIA+ students in Maryland were physically threatened or harmed due to their identity in the last year.
- Transgender students who identified their school as an affirming space reported significantly lower rates of attempting suicide.

Establishing a formal work group to study and recommend policies is not just a matter of social justice; it is a matter of public health and academic success that is supported by the research. For example, students in schools with inclusive policies and supportive educators demonstrate higher levels of school belonging and academic engagement (Poteat et al., 2024). Further, the presence of explicit, inclusive school policies is linked to increased self-worth among youth (Poteat et al., 2024) and school policy changes, such as access to gender-affirming facilities, are associated with positive long-term outcomes for gender minority youth (Colvin et al., 2019).

In conclusion, HB1011 is an important bill that aligns with Maryland's commitment to providing all learners an accurate, inclusive, and equitable education and we recommend a favorable report in committee.

References

Colvin, S., Egan, J. E., & Coulter, R. W. S. (2019). School climate & sexual and gender minority adolescent mental health. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 48(10), 1938–1951. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-01108-w>

Poteat, V. P., Richburg, A., Day, J., Finch, E. K., Calzo, J. P., Marx, R. A., Lipkin, A., & Yoshikawa, H. (2024). LGBTQ+ advocacy and inclusive school policies are associated with self-worth among youth in gender-sexuality alliances over the school year. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 61(11). <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0002024>

The Trevor Project. (2024). *2024 U.S. national survey on the mental health of LGBTQ young people*. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2024/>