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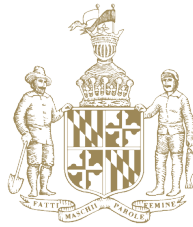
Government, Labor, and
Elections Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Election Law

Local Government/Bi-County
Agencies and Administration

Chair, Maryland Legislative
LGBTQ+ Caucus



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

The Honorable Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Chair
Ways and Means Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 130
Annapolis, MD 21401

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HB 1011: Workgroup on Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse Students

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

Transgender students have become a punching bag for pundits and politicians at every level, as they look to score political points with their base by fearmongering about a small and misunderstood community. Their rhetoric demonizes students and pits parents against their kids. This intense scrutiny of transgender youth is, simply put, the cynical exploitation of children.

Maryland is not immune from these discussions. As this committee knows all too well, the General Assembly spends hours every year debating the merits of banning trans youth from participation in school activities, health care access, and freedom of expression. We spend so much time on policies that would restrict and antagonize this small and vulnerable population of students, that we rarely ask the question: what would state policies to support transgender students look like? HB 1011 convenes a range of state stakeholders with diverse experiences and backgrounds to ask that question and submit recommendations to the General Assembly.

Thankfully, this workgroup won't start from scratch. A handful of counties have implemented policies to support their transgender students. In my experience, I have seen benefits for a generation of students who have attended Frederick County Public Schools since my county policy took effect in 2017. Hours of public feedback informed Frederick's Policy 443, a testament to the fact that these policies can be crafted in a way that stands the test of time, public opinion, and legal challenges. The resulting policies support all students in the school system and have positively transformed the school experience for youth in Frederick County.

Do students in other jurisdictions not deserve the same protection? Why should a student be entitled to different fundamental rights concerning their dignity and identity depending on the county they reside in? Is it fair to ask a student to visit another school in a different county to sacrifice their dignity and forgo their civil and legal rights?

I have spent over a decade working with transgender students in Frederick County, and through that firsthand experience, I understand that all students in all jurisdictions should have comprehensive and standardized policies that clearly define how school systems support them.

Harmful rhetoric targeting transgender students in our schools is not stopping, especially because it has been such an effective culture war issue, since there are so few trans people and even fewer trans students.

We, therefore, as the General Assembly, have a responsibility to spend significant time and effort considering how best to support this small student population that is receiving outsized negative attention, and to ensure they are afforded dignity and respect in every jurisdiction through clear and tangible policies.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 1011.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kris Fair". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Delegate Kris Fair
District 3, Frederick County