

February 12, 2020

Delegate Davis, Chair, Delegate Dumais, Vice Chair, and esteemed members of the House Economic Matters Committee.

Re: Maryland Bill HB1147

The National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund (Task Force) is the oldest national organization advocating for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people and their families, in the country. We offer this letter in support of HB1147 and urge its swift passage through the Senate and House.

Currently, transgender people face pervasive systemic discrimination and marginalization across the board of society. Large amounts experience discrimination and bullying in schools, where they're often pressured into dropping out or into depression and PTSD. Likewise, further down the road, it becomes much harder to acquire employment because of workplace discrimination. In the case of public accommodations discrimination, one of the most common spaces where this happens is in the case of public restrooms.

To give some weight to this matter, 24% of transgender people have experienced somebody questioning or challenging their presence in a restroom, whereas one in eight were harassed or assaulted for trying to use the restroom that corresponds to their gender identity. The vast majority of these incidences took place in public spaces such as restaurants, movie theaters, etc. This is a direct result of having gendered restrooms that lend themselves towards exclusion and giving people the power to police who gets to use what restroom.

This is especially true for non-binary people and others who do not identify as male or female within the gender binary. At a time that the State of Maryland now allows for non-binary gender markers in its licenses and ID documents, it should provide for as many restrooms to be accessible for non-binary people. Because of this, we would like to go on record as supporting that gender-neutral restroom markers do not contain the traditional male/female logos, but instead simply say "restroom" so as to not enforce the exclusion of the gender binary that the State of Maryland is committed to ending through its ID document laws.

Finally, it should be noted that this bill is not just for transgender people, but it also impacts people with disabilities who need personal care attendants and assistance to use the restroom. In the case of many, their aides may be opposite-gendered (especially when it's a family member), and will have to come in with them. Not creating as many gender-neutral restrooms as possible creates access concerns for many people with disabilities.



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For this and many other reasons, we recommend the passage of HB1147. Should you have further questions or concerns, you may reach Victoria M. Rodríguez-Roldán, director of the Trans/GNC and Disability Justice Projects, at either vrodriguezroldan@thetaskforce.org, or 202-639-6328.

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