

Trans Maryland
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House Bill 572
Economic Matters Committee
February 16, 2022
Position: Support

Trans Maryland is a multi-racial, multi-gender community power building organization for Maryland's trans community. **We enthusiastically support HB 572, Places of Public Accommodation and Public Buildings - Gender Inclusive Signage (Open to All Act)**. This bill equitizes bathroom access for all Maryland residents state-wide. Maryland's transgender (trans) and intersex communities face specific challenges when accessing basic bodily needs such as restrooms, healthcare, housing, and personal safety when moving about in public, and this bill lowers that barrier to access.

Gender non-conformity has existed since the beginning of time. Due to the violence of colonial systems, trans persons are subjected to violence at higher rates; this rate is even higher for Black and Brown nonbinary and gender expansive trans people. Black trans people face an almost 3x higher risk of abuse in places of public accommodations than white trans people, according to the latest US Trans Survey ([2015 US Transgender Survey](#)).

Nonbinary, gender non-conforming, gender expansive, and intersex people who do not have a binary gender presentation/expression (female or male) are often forced to choose a non-affirming (and potentially dangerous) restroom, or to incur health problems like urinary tract infections as a result of being precluded from using a public restroom. Being perceived as entering the "wrong" restroom is dangerous, increasing the likelihood of violence, and reinforces the minority stress disproportionately incurred by Maryland's trans communities.

Creating an inclusive and safe environment is essential to strengthening Maryland's economy. Governor Larry Hogan stated in 2015, "Maryland is open for business." This bill is crucial to ensuring Maryland can compete for business with nearby states that have already codified law on this matter. Maryland has a chance to join forward thinking nearby jurisdictions in their policies to equitize bathroom access for all people. Those cities include Washington DC which codified this in 2006 and Philadelphia, PA in 2016. Additionally, Maryland's own Baltimore City codified this in 2019, the City of Salisbury did so in 2020, and Howard County codified this in 2021.

Equitizing access to bathrooms means those who need assistance from caretakers will not face scrutiny for going into the "wrong" restroom. Access to changing facilities for babies should be available to all, so people of all genders and gender expressions caring for a child can change their baby. This can include trans men who are fathers and caretakers, gay men (transgender or cisgender) who are parents, and grandparents of any gender who care for a baby. No parent or caretaker should have to change a baby on the floor because changing tables are only available in women's restrooms.

Trans Maryland asks that you support HB 572. This crucial piece of legislation will benefit many current and future residents, in addition to those who travel to the state of Maryland. For these reasons, **we urge a favorable report on HB 572.**

For more information, contact Lee Blinder, Executive Director of Trans Maryland at lee@transmaryland.org