

HB1397_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

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Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#/1397 – FAVORABLE

Human Relations - Discrimination - Protected Characteristics

TO: Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby and members of the Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#1397, Human Relations - Discrimination - Protected Characteristics

This bill makes the moral statement that discrimination of any kind hurts all of us. Discrimination has been shown to exacerbate mental illness effects on those persons and groups experiencing that discrimination. The bill spells out categories of minority populations so affected.

The American Psychological Association has reported on the effects of discrimination. “A wealth of psychological research shows that discrimination can exacerbate stress. Moreover, discrimination-related stress is linked to mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, even in children.”¹ The report is from 2015 but there are good reasons to believe that problems have only gotten worse, especially after the pandemic.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness documents this in the Maryland State Fact Sheet.² The United States Office of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, in their Healthy People 2030 report on Discrimination states definitively

“Discrimination is a socially structured action that is unfair or unjustified and harms individuals and groups.^{1,2,3,4} Discrimination can be attributed to social interactions that occur to protect more powerful and privileged groups at the detriment of other groups.^{3,4} Stressful experiences related to discrimination can negatively impact health.⁵ Discrimination, especially racial discrimination, has also been known to cause symptoms of trauma.^{6,7,8”}³

If Maryland is to become the model for becoming a diverse, inclusionary, and equitable society at all levels this bill, working to eliminate discrimination in our society, is a vital first step.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report and pass HB1397.

¹ <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2015/impact>

² <https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/StateFactSheets/MarylandStateFactSheet.pdf>

³ <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/discrimination>

