

BILL NO: House Bill 1397
TITLE: Human Relations – Discrimination – Protected Characteristics
COMMITTEE: Economic Matters
HEARING DATE: March 06, 2024
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Women's Law Center of Maryland (WLC) is a non-profit legal services and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring the physical safety, economic security and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. While our direct representation projects are limited to primarily survivors of domestic violence, our advocacy is in support of gender justice, because all people are entitled to access to justice, equality and autonomy. This legislation, The Equal Opportunity for All Marylanders Act, will ensure that all people in our State will not be discriminated based on sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religious beliefs, marital status and disability.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland supports HB 1397. Certain laws in Maryland do not include these specific characteristics where there is a need for protection from discrimination. The Women's Law Center believes that discrimination based on these characteristics undermine an individual's rights and perpetuates systemic inequalities. These additional protections will help address discrimination in many areas, including education, housing, criminal law, commercial law, courts, education, health and health occupations and, labor and employment.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.