

**GARY SIMMONS**  
*Legislative District 12B*  
Anne Arundel County

Judiciary Committee  
*Subcommittees*

Criminal Law and Procedure  
Family and Juvenile Law



The Maryland House of Delegates  
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**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 4, 2024

Economic Matters Committee

RE: Letter of Support for HB1397 - Human Relations - Discrimination - Protected Characteristics

Dear Chairman Wilson and members of the committee,

I am writing this letter to express my strong support for HB1397 (Human Relations - Discrimination - Protected Characteristics), a pivotal piece of legislation that seeks to amend certain provisions of law, extending protections against discrimination to include sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religious beliefs, marital status, and disability. In the wake of diminishing protections at the federal level and the regrettable Maryland Supreme Court decision this past August in *John Doe v. Catholic Relief Services (CRS)*, it is now more critical than ever to ensure comprehensive safeguards against discrimination for all Marylanders.

The current landscape of diminished federal protections leaves a void that must be addressed at the state level to safeguard the rights and dignity of individuals across various aspects of their identity. The recent Maryland Supreme Court decision in *John Doe v. CRS* serves as a stark reminder of the vulnerabilities within our existing legal framework. We cannot afford to wait any longer to rectify these shortcomings and provide robust protections against discrimination in all contexts.

HB1397 stands as a beacon of progress, reflecting our commitment to inclusivity, justice, and equal treatment for all residents of Maryland. By expanding the protected characteristics to include sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religious beliefs, marital status, and disability, this legislation acknowledges the diverse tapestry of our community and seeks to ensure that no one is left vulnerable to discrimination.

I request to consider the urgency of the matter at hand and lend your support to HB1397. Now is the time for Maryland to take a decisive stand against discrimination, reinforcing our commitment to creating a fair, equitable, and inclusive environment for every individual in our state.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue, and I trust that you will stand on the side of justice and equality by supporting HB1397.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Simmons", written over a horizontal line.

Delegate Gary Simmons