



HB 0155 Inclusive Schools Act

**House Ways & Means Committee
January 27, 2021**

Position: SUPPORT

We, the board of directors of Annapolis Pride, support HB 0155, The Inclusive Schools Act.

Unlike other parts of Maryland law such as public accommodations, employment and fair housing, Maryland's education laws do not have codified anti-discrimination protections regarding marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

While the Maryland Department of Education does have stated guidelines, those do not provide the protection of law. **This legislation would close the gap of legal protections that already exist in other areas of state law but are lacking in the education system.**

All students should feel safe in their school and free to learn without threat of intimidation in any form. LGBTQ+ students are more likely to experience discrimination, harassment and bullying. In a 2020 national survey by the Trevor Project, 40% of LGBTQ+ youth under the age of 25 seriously considered suicide in the previous twelve months. It was 48% for ages 13-17. That is nearly half of LGBTQ+ students in the 6th to 12th grades.

This law would require schools to develop policies to protect LGBTQ+ students and provide a way for students and parents to file complaints and resolve discrimination issues. It will also forbid state money or vouchers from being used at schools that have discriminatory practices or fail to have non-discrimination policies.

At Annapolis Pride it is our belief and our mission that schools should be a safe, healthy, and supportive environment so ALL students can thrive and succeed to the best of their ability and we believe that this law would help bring us closer to that goal.

We respectfully urge this committee to issue a **favorable report for HB 0155.**

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