



Media Contact: Mark DeLancey
Phone: 603-662-7591
SalisburyPFLAG@outlook.com

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: HB0132/SB0041 Health-Mental and Emotional Disorders-Consent (Mental Health Access Initiative)

Organization: PFLAG Salisbury Inc., PO Box 5107, Salisbury Maryland 21802

Submitted by: Michèle Schlehofer, Legislative Chair

Position: **FAVORABLE**

SALISBURY PFLAG SUPPORTS THE MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS INITIATIVE

I am submitting this testimony in FAVOR of HB0132 / SB0041 on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury, the Salisbury, Maryland Chapter of PFLAG National.

HB0132 / SB0041 would change the age of consent for treatment of mental and emotional disorders from 16 to 12. Passing HB0132 / SB0041 is a major step forward towards increasing and improving mental health care access among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ+) youth.

According to the Trevor project, a LGBTQ+ youth suicide prevention organization, LGBTQ+ youth have disproportionate mental health needs, yet are significantly less likely than their non-LGBTQ+ peers to have these needs met. Prominent among the many barriers to accessing care are unsupportive family environments: 1/3 of LGBTQ+ youth do not want to get parental permission for mental health care, and concerns over whether therapists would disclose personal information to parents is high. By lowering the age of consent, LGBTQ+ youth's ability to access mental health services would greatly expand, particularly for those youth who are in unsupportive home environments, who are among the most vulnerable youth. It is for these reasons that, in 2010, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommended lowering the age of consent for accessing mental health care, a recommendation echoed by the Trevor Project.

In short: HB0132 / SB0041 would greatly increase access to mental health services among LGBTQ+ youth, particularly those in unsupportive home environments.

PFLAG Salisbury supports HB0132 / SB0041 and recommends a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.