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LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: HB1088/SB768 Nondiscrimination and LGBTQ+ Individuals

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

Submitted by: Michèle Schlehofer, Legislative Chair

Position: **FAVORABLE**

SALISBURY PFLAG SUPPORTS HB1088/SB768 Nondiscrimination and LGBTQ+ Individuals

I am submitting this testimony in FAVOR of HB1088/SB768 on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury, the Salisbury, Maryland Chapter of PFLAG National.

HB1088/SB768 specifies that it is the responsibility of the State of Maryland to ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals are protected from discrimination, and have equal access to a variety of programs, departments, and services within the Department of Human Services and Department of Juvenile Justice Services. Further, HB1088/SB768 would provide training to ensure equitable treatment, and prohibit contractors who engage in discriminatory practices from receiving state funds.

While HB1088/SB768 is a broad bill which would provide a slate of much-needed protections for LGBTQ+ Marylanders, of particular interest to PFLAG Salisbury, Inc. is the protections offered to LGBTQ+ youth and their families. LGBTQ+ youth are among the most vulnerable Marylanders. LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to be homeless and are overrepresented in both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system. LGBTQ+ youth in these systems are more likely to experience depression, emotional distress, substance abuse, anxiety, and suicidality than their non-LGBTQ+ peers. LGBTQ+ youth deserve access to resources, services, and programs which are non-discriminatory. HB1088/SB768 provides protections to ensure the needs of our most vulnerable youth are met in a culturally responsive manner.

PFLAG Salisbury supports HB1088/SB768 and recommends a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.