



LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **SB341 Public Senior Higher Education Institutions – Reproductive Health Services Plans**

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

Submitted by: Nicole Hollywood, President of the Board

Position: **FAVORABLE**

SALISBURY PFLAG SUPPORTS REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

I am submitting this testimony in FAVOR of **SB341** on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury, the Salisbury, Maryland Chapter of PFLAG National.

LGBTQIA+ people experience a number of health disparities. They're at higher risk of certain conditions, have less access to health care, and have worse health outcomes. These disparities come from a combination of homophobia and transphobia, a lack of access to healthcare, misinformation, and inequities in our health education curriculum that keep many LGBTQIA+ youth from developing appropriate health literacy. Most importantly, a shortage of affirming providers in all care areas is a significant problem for the LGBTQIA+ in rural parts of the State such as the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

In the absence of supportive services pregnancy, sexual transmitted diseases, and parenthood can diminish a college student's ability to complete their education. Accordingly, providing students with the resources, including access to affordable contraceptive options, gender-affirming care, and information they need to decide if and when they want to start a family, is key to supporting their postsecondary success.

The expansion of reproductive health access on college campuses promises to support education for all and, by extension, uphold their Title IX civil rights. Further, history has shown that legal access to contraception, sexual transmitted infection prevention, gender-affirming care, and abortion services directly links to improved educational and economic outcomes for female students and members of the LGBTQ community.

According to the Williams Institute, "College has the capacity to reinforce the gendered and transphobic treatment that many students have already experienced in school and in society, leading to poor academic and psychosocial outcomes; or, to support and empower these students (who already show signs of resilience, in that they have completed high school and enrolled in college), thus enhancing academic and personal success." Many transgender or gender non-conforming students will begin their gender identity exploration in college and the availability of culturally appropriate gender-affirming care plays an important role in supporting and sustaining their success.

Salisbury PFLAG supports each public senior higher education institution, in consultation with students, to develop and implement a reproductive health services plan to provide at the institution or to refer students to a comprehensive range of reproductive health services; and requiring the Maryland Department of Health, on request, to provide assistance to a public senior higher education institution in developing the plan. Accordingly, Salisbury PFLAG supports SB341 and recommends a FAVORABLE report in committee.