



## **LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY**

**Bill: HB 0352/SB 0888 American Studies and Social Equity Standards Advisory Board- Academic Standards and Model Policy**

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

Submitted by: Michele Copper, Board Member

Position: **FAVORABLE**

### **SALISBURY PFLAG SUPPORTS AN AMERICAN STUDIES AND SOCIAL EQUITY ADVISORY BOARD**

I am submitting this testimony in FAVOR of HB 0352/SB 0888 on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury, the Salisbury, Maryland Chapter of PFLAG National.

Salisbury is located in the Wicomico County Public Schools (WCPS) district, which contains 24 schools and serves more than 15,000 students. Students in WCPS include many LGBTQ+ youth, at all educational levels: high school, middle school, and elementary school. HB 0352/SB 0888 would create an advisory board comprised of a diverse representation of the people of the state of Maryland, with at least 80% having a background in advocacy for social and ethnic groups. The advisory board would develop model policy for ethnic and social equity in schools, and require county Boards of Education to implement an American Studies curriculum.

Salisbury PFLAG supports HB 0352/SB 0888 for its potential to increase education about LGBTQ+ people, history, and culture in Maryland public schools. LGBTQ+ youth are not taught about LGBTQ+ people, history, and culture, and do not have school-based access to this educational information. The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (2019) found that only 19.4% of schools taught positive representations of LGBTQ+ history, culture, and people to youth; further, 17% of schools taught in ways which reinforced negative stereotypes. Only 21.4% of Black youth were taught positive representations of LGBTQ+ history, culture, or people at school (GLSEN, 2020). Yet, doing so has significant benefits, improving educational outcomes and promoting safer learning environments. These are particularly vital for Black LGBTQ+ youth, who have lower rates of harassment, victimization, and bullying in schools with curriculum that is inclusive of LGBTQ+ people, history, and culture.

HB0850/SB0666 is a major step forward to providing equitable and inclusive education in Maryland public schools. Therefore, PFLAG Salisbury Inc. supports this legislation and recommends a FAVORABLE report in committee.