



LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **HB 0453 / SB 0550 Correctional Facilities—Transgender, Nonbinary, and Intersex Inmates (Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act)**

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

Submitted by: Michele Copper, Board Member

Position: **FAVORABLE**

SALISBURY PFLAG SUPPORTS THE TRANSGENDER, NONBINARY, AND INTERSEX INMATES ACT

I am submitting this testimony in FAVOR of HB 0453/SB 0550 on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury, the Salisbury, Maryland Chapter of PFLAG National.

Transgender, nonbinary, and intersex inmates are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system, and thus are overrepresented in the inmate population (Lamba Legal, 2012; Williams Institute, 2017). This is particularly true for Black transgender, nonbinary, and intersex people, who are additionally subjected to the over-policing that is present in Black communities. One in six transgender people, and one in two Black transgender people, have been incarcerated at some point in their lives (Lambda Legal).

Unfortunately, transgender, nonbinary, and intersex inmates experience discrimination, harassment, and victimization—including assault and rape—within prison systems at higher rates than their cisgender (people whose gender aligns with their assigned sex at birth) counterparts. According to research by the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE, 2015), transgender people are ten times as likely to be sexually assaulted by their fellow inmates and five times as likely to be sexually assaulted by staff. Transgender, nonbinary, and intersex inmates who are housed on the basis of their assigned sex at birth are at increased risk of victimization. Prison staff often lack knowledge and training specific to working with transgender, nonbinary, and intersex inmates.

HB 0453/SB 0550 would require creation of anti-discrimination policies and explicitly prohibit discrimination of transgender, nonbinary, and intersex inmates. It would also codify treatment of transgender, nonbinary, and intersex inmate, including their housing placement, in ways that align with their gender identity.

These protections and procedures would improve the experiences of transgender, nonbinary, and intersex inmates in the Maryland prison system, and particularly Black transgender, nonbinary, and intersex inmates, helping to ensure their safety. Because of this, PFLAG Salisbury Inc. supports HB 0453/SB 0550 and recommends a FAVORABLE report in committee.