



LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **SB116 Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts - Development of Content Standards and Implementation**

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

Submitted by: Nicole Hollywood, President of the Board

Position: **FAVORABLE**

SALISBURY PFLAG SUPPORTS INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

I am submitting this testimony in FAVOR of SB116 on behalf of PFLAG Salisbury, the Salisbury, Maryland Chapter of PFLAG National.

Our English and language arts curriculum in Maryland needs to be more inclusive and representative of the entirety of our population. When it comes to K-12 students – especially younger learners, who may not be able to assert agency over their reading options – exposing them to only insular and homogenous materials forces them to develop a skewed inaccurate version of the diversity of our society. This is particularly problematic for underrepresented groups – particularly LGBTQIA+ students and students of color.

When classroom readings do not reflect their own lived experiences and is centered on white heterosexual characters it only extends the disconnect and marginalization and does nothing to mitigate achievement gaps. A robust curriculum uses texts that builds knowledge and extends perspective. This means that students need to both be able to see themselves and what they're reading as reflection of themselves, but they also must be encouraged to see outwards and consider perspectives and experiences different from their own.

Research shows that academic and social-emotional development are intertwined. According to the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE, 2021) "We must acknowledge that books lend a voice and language to students who may not have had access to such messages otherwise. Therefore, students of all gender identities and expressions—those who demonstrate those identities visibly while they are in our classes and those who may live their gender more expansively after they leave our classrooms—deserve to see themselves in books and other curricular materials and confirm the wide spectrum of identities that do not exist in a vacuum, but are a part of an ever-growing and changing world."

Salisbury PFLAG supports requiring the State Board of Education to develop content standards for inclusive and diverse English language arts to be included in the State Standards and Frameworks for English Language

Arts; requiring each county board of education to develop and implement age-appropriate curriculum guides for inclusive and diverse English language arts; and requiring each public school to include inclusive and diverse English language arts in the English language arts curriculum. Therefore, PFLAG Salisbury Inc. supports SB116 and recommends a FAVORABLE report in committee.