



**Board of Education
of Howard County**

**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Howard County Council
July 18, 2022**

Vicky Cutroneo, *Chair*

Antonia Watts, *Vice Chair*

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*Superintendent
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CB48-2022: FAVORABLE

AN ACT to establish an LGBTQIA+ Commission; providing for the membership of the Commission; providing for the purpose and duties of the Commission; providing for the method of appointment and staff; requiring certain meetings and certain reports; providing the expiration dates of the terms of the initial members of the Commission; and generally relating to the LGBTQIA+ Commission.

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board), along with the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS), are committed to uplifting the rights and well-being of all students and staff, including those in the LGBTQIA+ community. With the establishment of a permanent Commission as called for under Council Bill 48-2022, Howard County is affirming the value of diversity among our citizens, while also recognizing there is more work to be done to attain true inclusion and respect for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

At the school level, HCPSS works to ensure the safety, comfort, and healthy development of LGBTQIA+ students through consideration of the needs of individual students. HCPSS has worked to further the understanding of the needs of transgender and gender nonconforming students and to support them in a more comprehensive manner by training staff, developing guidelines, and engaging stakeholders. These efforts have included the establishment of Rainbow Representatives at every HCPSS school, who work to create a more welcoming and affirming school environment for LGBTQIA+ students, providing instructional support for educators, and ensuring each school has educators and leaders who are allies and advocates for LGBTQIA+ students, staff, and families. HCPSS has also moved to the use of chosen names, pronouns, and offers a masking process for names and genders to support student identity. Just this past month, HCPSS held its inaugural Pride Week to bring together Howard County in activities that supported the LGBTQIA+ student, staff, and family community.

Representation of the school system through membership of the Superintendent and students on the Commission under CB48-2022 would be in line with HCPSS efforts to engage stakeholders in the community at-large in order to expand comprehensive supports for LGBTQIA+ students. The Board supports these inclusions, and offers the following additional membership and duties the Council might consider to further the impact of the Commission:

- Expansion of ex-officio members under (D) (1) in lines 24-27 on page 2 to include a member of the Board of Education of Howard County;
- Specification of the student representative under (D) (2) (VII) in lines 7-8 on page 3 to include at least one HCPSS student;

- Expansion of the student representative under (D) (2) (VII) in lines 7-8 on page 3 to include a Howard Community College student; and
- Expansion of duties under (H) (4) in lines 27-30 on page 3 to include incarcerated individuals as an at-risk segment.

The Board commends County Executive Calvin Ball for elevating the recommendation of the LGBTQ+ Workgroup to solidify a relationship between the LGBTQIA+ community and the various facets of the local Howard County government, and urges the Council to vote favorably on CB48-2022.