



# HOMELESS PERSONS REPRESENTATION PROJECT, INC.

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## **Council Bill 20-0199R Resolution – Investigative Hearing – Well-Being of the Trans Community in Baltimore**

Health Committee, September 15, 2020

Testimony of Kyra Brown, Homeless Persons Representation Project, Inc.

Members of the Health Committee and Chairperson Kristerfer Burnett thank you for holding this hearing. My name is Kyra Brown and I am a paralegal at the Homeless Persons Representation Project (HPRP). HPRP is a free legal services provider in Maryland. Our goal is to end homelessness in Maryland by providing free legal advice, counsel, education, representation, and advocacy for low-income persons who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

The most pressing message to be derived from what I am hoping is a series of hearings culminating in legislative action, is that material change in the name of bettering the lives of Baltimore's trans community is vital to the larger health of Baltimore City. By this, I mean that a healthy city that cares for all of its citizens does not allow for any one group to be forgotten, or erased.

To be Black in Baltimore City already negatively affects one's health outcomes as it has been found that life expectancy can differ as much as 20 years between neighborhoods<sup>1</sup>. The legacy of redlining and gentrification coupled with environmental racism, over-policing, and anti-blackness have made just living in Baltimore City unbearable for the average cis Black resident. Compounding this reality with being trans further elucidates the disparities that typify the existence of trans people in Baltimore. Trans residents may have de jure protections against discrimination in housing, employment, and public spaces<sup>2</sup>, however in reality these protections are grossly lacking.

With these facts in mind, it is obvious that it is not enough to focus on trans people surviving in Baltimore, or even "thriving" in Baltimore. What does it even mean to "thrive" if rampant transphobia is the norm? What must be understood is that trans people, the most marginalized among us, must be centered to make any dent in the inequities writ into our society at large and Baltimore City in particular. When those at the margins of society are brought to the center, only then can we begin to discuss what it means to thrive. Calling for this hearing and acknowledging the rampant violence trans people face at every level of society is a commendable first step towards something larger, and still, it is not enough unless material change is made. As such material change will only result from the implementation of solutions driven by the Black trans community.

Undoing the violence of cissexism calls for the undoing of ideals held firmly not only by individuals but also of ideals that have been codified into law. If transphobia is the normative position and is upheld by the institutions meant to serve the people how do we move past this? I am hoping that this hearing spurs action

1. STATE OF HEALTH IN BALTIMORE: WHITE PAPER 2017, AVAILABLE AT: <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/state-health-baltimore-winter-2016/state-health-baltimore-white-paper-2017#:~:text=Current%20Snapshot%20of%20Health%20in,to%2020%20years%20between%20neighborhoods.>
2. FAIRNESS FOR ALL MARYLANDERS ACT OF 2014, AVAILABLE AT: <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2014RS/bills/sb/sb0212T.pdf>

towards materially answering this question as the lives and safety of our trans residents depend upon it. It is imperative that the Council listen to the trans community and implement community-driven solutions.

I stridently urge the council to bring the issues of our Trans community to the fore as it is only then that we can begin to address the web of violence that embodies Black life, trans life, and Black trans life in our city.

Thank you again,

*Kyra L. Brown*

Kyra Brown

1. STATE OF HEALTH IN BALTIMORE: WHITE PAPER 2017, AVAILABLE AT:  
<https://health.baltimorecity.gov/state-health-baltimore-winter-2016/state-health-baltimore-white-paper-2017#:~:text=Current%20Snapshot%20of%20Health%20in,to%2020%20years%20between%20neighb%20hoods.>
2. FAIRNESS FOR ALL MARYLANDERS ACT OF 2014, AVAILABLE AT:  
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