

F R O M	Name & Title	Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, Commissioner	Health Department AGENCY REPORT	
	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201		
	Subject: Position:	20-0199R – Investigative Hearing - Well-being of the Transgender Community in Baltimore FAVORABLE		

To: President and Members
of the City Council
c/o 409 City Hall

September 15, 2020

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review Council Bill #20-0199R, entitled, “Investigative Hearing - Well-being of the Transgender Community in Baltimore.” The purpose of this bill is to call on several City and State agencies to “update the Council on services provided to and the general well-being of the transgender community in Baltimore.”

BCHD is a strong proponent of inclusivity and directly addressing any health disparities across all of Baltimore City’s communities. The transgender community in Baltimore City, as well as across the country, experiences greater discrimination in day-to-day interactions and in accessing healthcare than the public at large.¹ As documented in a number of studies, continuous exposure to stigma, trauma, and discrimination marginalizes the transgender community, thereby contributing to health risk and poor outcomes.² The transgender community reports increased levels of physical violence and sexual assault, “over four times the national average of HIV infection,” greater use of “drugs and alcohol specifically to cope with mistreatment,” significantly higher rates of tobacco usage, and substantially higher rates of suicide attempts.³ Numerous instances of violence against the transgender community have been documented in Baltimore City.⁴

¹ N. Ali, W., SD. Baral, R., U. Boehmer, D., R. Clark, N., K. Clements-Nolle, R., Cole, E., . . . KJ. Zucker, A. Self-Reported Discrimination in Health-Care Settings Based on Recognizability as Transgender: A Cross-Sectional Study Among Transgender U.S. Citizens. Retrieved September 11, 2020, from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10508-017-1028-z>

² Cargill VA. Valuing the Vulnerable: The Important Role of Transgender Communities in Biomedical Research. *Ethn Dis.* 2020;30(2):247-250; doi:10.18865/ed.30.2.247

³ Grant, Jaime M., Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling. *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*. Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011.

⁴ Staff, B. (2019, September 07). At vigil for transgender teen killed in Baltimore, LGBTQ community stresses unity in face of violence. Retrieved September 11, 2020, from <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-cr-17-year-old-transgender-teen-killed-20190907-dvsu63crwjf7pmqtiub3rzx13e-story.html>; Kadhim, E. (2020, April 15). Virtual vigil for transgender woman killed in Baltimore. Retrieved September 11, 2020, from <https://www.wmar2news.com/news/crime-checker/baltimore-city-crime/virtual-vigil-for-transgender-woman-killed-in-baltimore>

Understanding the significant barriers facing Baltimore City's transgender community members, BCHD has engaged in extensive advocacy efforts. For example, BCHD successfully sought the passage of "House Bill 1120 - Health Care Providers and Health Benefit Plans – Discrimination in Provision of Services" in the Maryland General Assembly. This law will, in part, prevent discrimination against transgender individuals by hospitals and insurers. Moreover, BCHD actively seeks inclusion of the transgender community in its Ryan White Planning Council, HIV Planning Group and Commission, and the Ending the HIV Epidemic Working Group; these groups help to plan the distribution of federal funds and resources to combat HIV/AIDS locally.

In addition to ongoing advocacy efforts, BCHD provides direct services to the transgender community through the Sexual Health Clinic and Family Planning & Reproductive Health Clinic. These clinics provide free and confidential STI testing and treatment, HIV testing and treatment, PrEP and PRP for the prevention of HIV, Hepatitis C testing and treatment, referrals for primary care/dental/vision services, and substance use and mental health screenings and referrals. Our Family Planning & Reproductive Health Clinic also provides health education and outreach. Recognizing the many health disparities and barriers faced by this community, BCHD has highlighted further assessment of transgender needs and appropriate interventions, including cultural humility training in both the Baltimore draft Ending the HIV Epidemic Plan (2020-2030) and the draft BCHD Sexual Health Strategy.

BCHD believes a meaningful dialogue is necessary to meet the needs of Baltimore City's transgender community and therefore requests a **favorable** report on Council Bill #20-199R.