

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 583**  
**Joanna Diamond**  
**Women's Law Center**

Thank you for your attention to this proposed legislation and for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Joanna Diamond. I am here on behalf of the Women's Law Center of Maryland (WLC). Established in 1971, WLC advocates for an equal playing field in the law for women and children. For more than a quarter of a century, the WLC has fought and won many battles to protect and preserve the rights of women--by educating the public and the judiciary on the effects of legal decisions affecting women, by monitoring compliance with the law, by seeking to change unjust laws and unjust lawmaking, and by implementing innovative programs to pave the way for systemic change. I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 583.

I am here today to support all women. No one deserves to be refused work, denied housing or credit or live in the fear of violence because of his or her gender.

This legislation will affirm the right of all Maryland citizens to live with dignity and respect. As an organization committed to advancing the rights and protecting the health and safety of women and children throughout our state, we are called to stand for justice for all people subject to gender-based discrimination or harassment.

The Women's Law Center has worked for decades with thousands of Maryland women and children. We know the true day-to-day reality of women's lives. Opponents of this bill have claimed that this bill will make bathrooms unsafe for women and children. Facts matter and this is not a fact.

Opposing this bill does nothing to benefit or protect women and children. By suggesting that this legislation makes bathrooms unsafe for women and children, opponents of transgender equality spread dangerous myths about assault and divert attention from the facts. It is also important to emphasize that the law provides no safe harbor for criminal activity, wherever it occurs whether in a public or private space.

It is offensive that opponents of this bill would use unfounded threats to scare women and those who care about our safety into opposing legislation that will protect others from real genderbased discrimination and violence. These scare tactics are a dangerous diversion from the real sources of discrimination and violence that women face every day.

For all of these reasons, I recommend a favorable report on Senate Bill 583. Thank you most kindly for the opportunity to testify on this measure.