



Citizens for a Responsible Government
Maryland Citizens for a Responsible Government

GENDER BILL OPPONENTS CLOSE TO MEETING FIRST TEST FOR BALLOT INITIATIVE

Leggett Accuses Group of Misrepresentation

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD – A grassroots organization of citizens has collected over 10,000 signatures on a petition calling for a referendum on a new bill it feels grants special rights to transsexuals, transvestites and cross-dressers.

“People are energized; they really feel betrayed by their county government. The issue of slots is going to be put to the voters by way of referendum, but this issue is more important because it may effect the privacy of women and children,” according to Ruth Jacobs, president of Maryland Citizens for a Responsible Government, which is leading the initiative.

The group must present the signatures of 12,500 registered voters to the county’s Board of Election Supervisors by February 4, with another 12,500 due by February 16 in order to meet the criteria for a ballot referendum.

On Wednesday, Dr. Jacobs received an email from County Executive Isiah Leggett telling her she has “an obligation to state the facts,” when discussing the bill’s provisions. His email follows her request that he support citizens’ right to vote on the measure because it would potentially open women’s restrooms, shower rooms, and locker rooms in health clubs, schools and community pools to transsexual men. Leggett countered that MCRG was misrepresenting the issue because the County Council and he have articulated the view that such facilities are not included in the bill.

However, it is the group’s contention that unless a specific exemption is included, a complaint by transgenders brought before the County’s Human Rights Commission would determine the disposition of the bathroom facilities of public accommodations, not the public remarks made by the executive and legislative bodies in interviews.

“We believe the bill is purposefully vague in order to let the Commission have the last say, [which is on record as supporting the rights of transgenders to use the bathroom of their choice.](#)” according to Jacobs.



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Although the bill's sponsor, Duchy Trachtenberg (D., At Large) has stated that no jurisdiction covered by similar legislation has reported a problem, an incident at a local health club last week may bear out its opponents' fears. Local news sources reported that a man wearing women's clothing walked into the women's shower and locker rooms of the Rio Sport and Health Club in Gaithersburg. The incident caused a shocked reaction by women in the area.

Volunteers for the group have been collecting signatures in a variety of venues including malls, grocery stores, churches, synagogues and mosques. The group estimates that over 100 petition circulators will be out this weekend. "We expect to be over 12,500 by February 4th. People are quite upset when they discover the law still covers public accommodations and their facilities. Facilities are bathrooms. Public accommodations are for example, your local public swimming pool. Though the 'notorious' bathroom amendment specifically allowing transgenders to enter the opposite sex bathroom was stricken, the language as passed strongly threatens to allow cross-dressers to enter the bathroom of their choice." The bill adds 'gender identity' to its list of protected classes covered under its non-discrimination code. It covers housing, employment, lending practices, taxi and cable services, and public accommodations and their facilities. Its opponents believe it discards biological sex as the standard for defining gender, and instead adopts loose, subjective criteria. The bill sets no standards, such as having to have sex-change surgery.

The bill states: "Gender identity means an individual's actual or perceived gender including a person's gender-related appearance, expression, image, identity or behavior, whether or not those gender-related characteristics differ from the characteristics customarily associated with the person's assigned sex at birth."

The new law had great public opposition when proposed, according to MCRG. Several of MCRG's volunteers reviewed the emails, letters, and telephone calls received by the Council's office and discovered that out of the 2,883 communications received, 2,424 opposed the bill, with only 459 supporting it. The Council tallied comments such as "Do not pass this outrageous bill" and "I have been really racking my brains trying to understand the purpose and reasoning for the council vote on the transgender Bill 23-07 . Please help me understand," as uncommitted.

The petitions can be viewed at www.notmyshower.net.

- [Maryland Citizens for a Responsible Government Letter to Isaiah Leggett](#)
- [Isaiah Leggett's response](#)
- [Maryland Citizens for a Responsible Government Response](#)
- [County's new Gender Identity Law Tested](#)

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