

NEW GROUP LAUNCHES REFERENDUM DRIVE, SEEKS TO OVERTURN GENDER ID BILL

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Montgomery County, MD – A group of citizens launched a petition drive today, seeking to overturn the county's new gender identity bill. "We want to inform the citizens that this is a bad law all around and should be repealed," according to Michelle Turner, spokeswoman for the group.

In order to place the issue on the ballot next November, the signatures of over 25,000 registered voters have to be collected within 90 days of the bill's signing. This means the group has until February 16 to submit its petitions to the Montgomery County Board of Elections.

The drive begins with the kickoff of the group's new website, www.notmyshower.net which has a downloadable petition, according to Dr. Ruth Jacobs, president of the newly minted organization, which is awaiting final state approval for its tentative name, Maryland Citizens for Responsible Government.

Dr. Jacobs is a local infectious disease specialist and has been active in Montgomery County's sex ed curriculum fight through Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum. She decided to take on the task of opposing the bill when her suggestion of adding explicit language protecting women and children's safety and privacy rights was rejected. "Instead, the council explicitly added restrooms, showers, locker rooms and other such areas to the bill," she said. The resulting county wide outcry resulted in the County Council pulling the notorious bathroom amendment from the bill. However, without explicit language exempting areas of shared nudity, women and children are still vulnerable.

"The council and county executive have publicly stated that access to these areas will be decided by their operators. But all they are doing is kicking the issue into the lap of the county's Human Rights Commission which is on record saying it will grant bathroom rights to transgenders according to their perceived gender when a case is brought before it." said Turner.

Opponents criticize the bill for its vague definition of gender identity. The bill defines gender identity as "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."

Other criticisms include the lack of an explicit exemption for religious, parochial and public schools and daycare centers in their employment practices. They lose their right to make judgments about the appropriateness of hiring transvestites and transsexuals as teachers and counselors.

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