



**SB0765 – Minority Business Enterprises - Sexual & Gender Minorities (Imari’s Business Pride Act)**

Presented to the Hon. Paul Pinsky and  
Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
March 4, 2021 1:00 p.m.

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**POSITION: SUPPORT**

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee to issue **a favorable report on SB0765 - Minority Business Enterprises - Sexual & Gender Minorities**, sponsored by Senator Mary Washington.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. As part of our efforts to protect reproductive freedom for all Marylanders, we work to ensure every individual has the right to decide if, when, and how to form their families, and to parent in good health, in safety, and with dignity. In doing so, we support expanding business opportunities for sexual and gender minorities as it aligns with our mission to improve health and wellbeing in these communities.

SB0765 intends to alter the definition of “socially and economically disadvantaged individual” for purpose of certifying certain minority business enterprises to include certain sexual and gender minorities. Dating back to 2018, Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh signed an executive order to recognize LGBTQ-owned businesses. This order essentially put LGBTQ-owned businesses in the same category as women and minority owned businesses that are afforded a certain percentage of city incentives.<sup>1</sup> This state legislation would be a great extension of this action in order to solidify the incentives needed for LGBTQ businesses to thrive. Jonathan D. Lovitz, senior vice president of the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce, agreed that former Mayor Catherine Pugh’s order helped to certify businesses and encouraged more businesses to become certified, thereby creating opportunities for entrepreneurship and job growth. According to the LGBT Chamber of Commerce, the estimated 1.4 million LGBTQ-run companies in the United States generate \$1.7 trillion a year in revenue, in addition to a 1.5 billion contribution from its members alone.<sup>2</sup>

While we believe all minority-owned businesses are essential, we wish to uplift what SB0765 could do LGBTQ-owned health-related business. If they desire, it is important that LGBTQ businesses have the option to become franchised in order to assist sexual and gender minorities with sexual reproductive healthcare and support services in their respective communities. Data from a nationally representative Center for American Progress survey conducted in 2017 showed that LGBTQ people experience discrimination in healthcare

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<sup>1</sup> Cohn, Meredith. “Baltimore Mayor Issues Order Recognizing LGBTQ-Owned Businesses.” [Baltimoresun.com](http://Baltimoresun.com), Baltimore Sun, 12 Dec. 2018, [www.baltimoresun.com/business/bs-bz-lgbtq-business-order-20181120-story.html](http://www.baltimoresun.com/business/bs-bz-lgbtq-business-order-20181120-story.html)

<sup>2</sup> Avery, Dan. “N.Y.C. Now Largest U.S. City to Grant LGBTQ Businesses Access to Minority Contracts.” [NBCNews.com](http://NBCNews.com), NBCUniversal News Group, 19 Jan. 2021, [www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/n-y-c-now-largest-u-s-city-grant-lgbtq-n1254782](http://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/n-y-c-now-largest-u-s-city-grant-lgbtq-n1254782)

settings, which discourages them from finding health care.<sup>3</sup> SB0765 has the ability to help generate more LGBTQ healthcare-related businesses to alleviate discrimination. Not only will LGBTQ people no longer fear judgement from healthcare providers, but they will have a safe space to fully express their health concerns without fear of judgement nor retribution.

Maryland's LGBTQ+ business owners deserve the same opportunities to not only contribute to the economy, but to eliminate discrimination in health care facilities and more. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on SB0765**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>3</sup>Shabab Ahmed Mirza and Caitlin Rooney. "Discrimination Prevents LGBTQ People From Accessing Healthcare." Center for American Progress, 13 Aug. 2019, [www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbtq-rights/news/2018/01/18/445130/discrimination-prevents-lgbtq-people-accessing-health-care/](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbtq-rights/news/2018/01/18/445130/discrimination-prevents-lgbtq-people-accessing-health-care/)