

Bill 4-22: Gender Inclusive Restrooms
Position: Favorable with Ammendments

My name is Blake Mihm and I use they/them or he/him pronouns. Thank you for allowing me to speak today about my support of Bill 4-22, for Gender Inclusive Restrooms. I work for the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services in HIV/STI prevention.

My job brings me all over the county as I serve my community. I am frequently in county buildings, and do not have a restroom to use because all the restrooms indicate a gender. Most of these buildings have single-occupant, private bathrooms, yet they have signage that indicates only one gender is allowed in the restroom. It is an awful feeling to know that I cannot access a bathroom during my workday without feeling fear of harassment and embarrassment. It is unfortunate that even in county buildings, there are no restrooms for employees and clients such as myself, despite the presence of single-stall restrooms. A simple change of signage would open these restrooms to everyone who needs them, including those in the disability community who require help in the restroom and people with young children. Making these restrooms inclusive to everyone is an easy change that will have a real beneficial impact on people like me everyday.

For the sake of clarity, I propose that the signs simply state what is available inside the restroom with words and pictures, such as toilet, urinal, or baby changing station. I suggest signs that simply say "toilet," "restroom," or "accessible restroom," and not signs that say things like "gender-neutral restroom." Language such as "gender-neutral" may be confusing to people who are not familiar with the term. It is simply a restroom, and does not need to say anything about what genders are allowed to use it.

Thank you for your time.
Blake Mihm