



June/July 2025

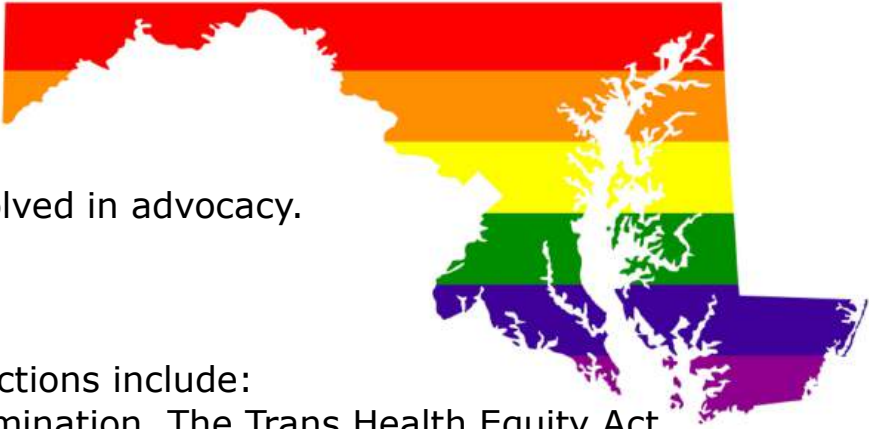
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Vol. 1 No. 4

# Breaking Down Maryland’s LGBTQ Policy Landscape

By Johanna Dolan

As we celebrated Pride Month a few months ago, it’s important to take a look at where we are and where we could be heading. As you probably know, Maryland is a leader in advancing LGBTQ rights. Our state offers us robust protections across various sectors. However, recent federal shifts have introduced challenges that require renewed vigilance and advocacy. This article looks into the current landscape of LGBTQ rights in Maryland, highlighting what's at stake, how to take action, and ways to get involved in advocacy.



Current Protections in Maryland

Maryland law provides comprehensive safeguards against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Key protections include:

- Healthcare: The Maryland Department of Health ensures that LGBTQ individuals access necessary medical services without discrimination. The Trans Health Equity Act of 2023 confirms the right of Transgender individuals to receive gender affirming care through Medicaid in Maryland.
- Education: Schools are to respect students' gender identities, including using chosen names and pronouns.
- Employment and Housing: State laws prohibit discrimination in employment and housing, ensuring equal opportunities for LGBTQ individuals.

Challenges Amid Federal Policy Changes

Despite these state-level protections, recent federal actions have posed significant challenges:

- Healthcare Access: An executive order issued by President Trump aims to restrict gender-affirming care for individuals under 19, threatening the availability of essential healthcare services. A federal judge in Maryland has temporarily blocked this order, but the situation remains fluid.
- Educational Content: The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case involving Montgomery County parents seeking to opt their children out of classes featuring LGBTQ-themed storybooks, citing religious objections. The outcome could impact how LGBTQ topics are addressed in educational settings.

What's at Stake

This convergence of supportive state laws and restrictive federal policies creates a complex environment:

- Healthcare: Access to gender-affirming care (in conservative states) and federal funding (in progressive states) is under threat, potentially leading to increased health risks for transgender youth.
- Education: Legal battles over curriculum content could influence the inclusivity of educational materials, affecting LGBTQ representation and acceptance.
- Legal Precedents: Decisions made in these cases may set national precedents, influencing the balance between state protections and federal policies.

How to Take Action

Engagement and advocacy are crucial in safeguarding and advancing LGBTQ rights:

- Stay Informed: Regularly update yourself on policy changes and legal cases affecting the LGBTQ community.
- Support Legal Challenges: Contribute to organizations fighting discriminatory policies through donations or volunteer work.
- Contact Legislators: Communicate with state and federal representatives to express support for LGBTQ-friendly legislation.

Ways to Get Involved in Advocacy

Maryland offers many avenues for advocacy and support, including:

- FreeState Justice: As Maryland's leading LGBTQ legal services nonprofit, they engage in policy advocacy and provide legal assistance.
- The Pride Center of Maryland: As a hub for the LGBTQ community, they offer resources, support services, and cultural programs.
- Frederick Center: Focused on supporting LGBTQ individuals and families in the Frederick area, they provide various programs and advocacy initiatives.
- Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs: This state commission assesses challenges, studies best practices for inclusion, and testifies to legislative bodies.
- And Many Others!

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# “What is Pride?”: Chase Brexton’s Center for LGBTQ Health Equity Responds

By The Center for LGBTQ Health Equity

What is Pride? Pride means something a little different and often very personal to everyone. In celebration of Pride Month, we asked staff members at the Center for LGBTQ Health Equity for their reflections on what Pride means to each of them.

Sam McClure, Executive Director, The Center for LGBTQ Health Equity

For me, Pride means I, and my community can take up as much space as we want, be as joyful as we want, and remind each other how far we have come. And then remind each other that we didn’t come this far just to come this far. Yes, we still have to fight, and it is okay. We’ve always been fighting. It also means showing up to do the work to build the businesses and organizations that will meet our needs now, and for many generations to come, because we are not going anywhere.

Kate Bishop, Education Coordinator

PRIDE means I'm working, it's the most intense week of our year. I've served in the ElderPride tent this past decade, providing a shady space for Elders to know their worth and young ones to find their path. I'll be winding my shy self up to get relentlessly friendly, losing my voice from shouting, aching from overdoing it, gratefully devoting my small service to our revolution in progress.

When I get hot and tired, when sunscreen melts into my eyes and my feet hurt, I remind myself: it's always someone's first Pride, babe. You've been blessed with a career as a movement Ambassador. Time to dig down to those rainbow reserves and offer the embrace of Community to all who seek it.

Those couple weekends in June, my family's sparkly reunion, are my chance to absorb the joyfire that fuels the unglittered hard work of being a Gay for Pay the rest of the year. Pride means standing strong in the authenticity I damn well earned, loving my people on purpose.

Ann Marie Brokmeier, Staff Therapist

Pride to me means honoring our LGBTQIA+ elders, our queer ancestors, and transcestors through unabashed hopefulness for our futures, collective and individual. It means allowing ourselves to affirm our authentic selves; to honor generational pain and systemic trauma wounds; to practice community care and mutual aid; and to truly feel joy as we celebrate who we are, how we got here, and where we are going.

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# A Pride-Filled Pride!

By The Rev. Mark F. Phillips, Minister,  
First & Franklin Presbyterian Church, Baltimore

We are in the midst of LGBTQ+ Pride month, a global celebration that grew out of a pivotal movement of resistance to legalized bigotry in this country. In 1970, several thousand people walked in the first Pride march through the streets of New York City. Now, millions of people from all walks of life participate in Pride activities.



It is interesting, though, that the word “Pride” originally had a negative connotation, in which a person exhibiting pride had an “unduly high opinion of oneself,” according to Webster’s New World College Dictionary. How many of us have quoted warning of author of the Old Testament Book of Proverbs: “Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 19:18). We have many words for pride, and they are not good: “Big headed,” “uppity,” “high and mighty,” “stuck up.”

I wonder, have you been called any of those things as a caution or a correction? A reminder not to stick out too much. Or maybe you’ve been told you should be ashamed of everything about yourself, not proud at all. The LGBTQ+ community, along with women, people of color, poor people, and neurodivergent people, are all told not to be too proud, too loud, too much, too showy, too out, anything that makes someone uncomfortable. The world is full of hateful speech and real danger for the LGBTQ+ community. This year, people who count say there are 590 pending laws ready to limit freedoms, coming down especially hard on our trans friends and trans kids. Only certain individuals are allowed to be proud.

Sadly, even the church plays a big part in that. One famous Christian thinker says, “Pride is a turning away from God; the refusal to stay in one’s proper place.” But who says, who says what our place is, what if pride is really turning towards God, seeing what God built into us, seeing what God created us to be. What if pride is about seeing and discovering the gifts that God has given us and using them in the way that only we can? What if pride is just being our real selves in God’s world?

In a recent article for his congregation’s newsletter, the Rev. Andrew Ogletree of St. Patrick’s Episcopal Church in Washington, DC, makes a helpful distinction between pride that is rooted in a sense of superiority and pride rooted in an awareness of being created in the image of God. Father Ogletree writes, As I celebrate Pride month as a gay man and a Christian, what I always take away from being part of Pride celebrations is that the LGBTQ+ communities remind human beings of their true value: one that does not come from arbitrary human-made labels and limited understanding, but from the God of all creation, who is LOVE, who desires for human beings to love and be loved in mutual respect and understanding, and for humans to live at peace with one another.

I attended my first Pride parade over 25 years ago in Washington, DC. Since then, I have attended parades on Long Island, New York City, and Detroit, Michigan. The thing that has always struck me, and the thing I have loved every time since, is the sheer delight in who people are meant to be, the freedom to experiment until they get it right, and the joy of living in our own bodies in place without judgment. It is a moving experience for me to see young people get that in a way that older people didn’t until much later in life. Pride month is its own, beautiful, essential celebration, and if we are watching, we can all learn something because, without the right amount of genuine pride, we can become pale echoes of our true selves. Pride is meant to be part of us, allowing us to see who we truly are and to use our gifts to their fullest potential. This is hard to learn if you’ve been told to be quiet and smaller than who you really are.

This month, and every month, the LGBTQ+ community shows us how to wrestle Pride out of hate, Pride out of ignorance, Pride out of oppression, Pride out of indifference. This month, we celebrate the lives and the bodies of the people the world might ignore. This month, we are called back to action to make this a reality and ensure it is safe for everyone, not just during Pride month, but every day, everywhere.

Genuine pride, the real amount of pride, is right at the intersection of who God created us to be and how we live freely in the world. We can never be too proud of who God created us to be and how we live those gifts. That right amount of pride is rooted in God, our creator, and it can’t go to our heads.

So be big-headed, be uppity, be full of yourself, be full of your goodness, dance and sing and move in the world, be full of the God who made you because that God is filled with Pride over you.

# Breaking Down Maryland’s LGBTQ Policy Landscape Continued

Maryland’s commitment to LGBTQ rights remains strong, but ongoing federal challenges necessitate active engagement and advocacy. By staying informed and involved, we can continue to protect and advance the rights of the LGBTQ community in our state. So, as you celebrate, remember also to advocate!



Johanna Dolan is a passionate leader, strategist, and advocate dedicated to helping people and organizations thrive through recovery, well-being, and sustainable growth. As the founder of Dolan Research International, Johanna blends lived experience with behavioral health expertise to make a real difference.

# Resilience With Pride

By Janan Broadbent, Ph. D.

What is the one trait that gives us the strength to get through tough times, through breakups, losses, challenges of jobs, family, or unstable times? It is resilience, defined as the ability of a person to adjust to or recover readily from illness, adversity, major life changes, etc., buoyancy. We are in the middle of unfathomable changes in our lives, and this trait is going to be doing a lot of work.



While June is Pride month, and there have been several celebrations where good times were had, there have also been unimaginable events in our country where authoritarianism has been raising its ugly head. I hear the anxiety and the sense of unreality from friends, patients, neighbors and all over social media. How do you, dear reader, cope with this, when there are daily assaults on the LGBTQ+T community? Maryland is a blue state but nonetheless, there are areas where you see signs that indicate otherwise.

It is crucial that we remember that we are not alone, that there are millions of like-minded people who do not want a tyranny. This is where we need to tap into our resilience, remembering the numerous times we bounced back from a failed test, or a broken romance, or a layoff from a job. Reaching out to people we know renews our depleted resources, gives us mental and even physical energy to get through the crisis. If and when you feel down and dismayed, that this turmoil may not end or worse times may be around the corner, remember, as the Persian proverb goes, this too will pass, because just as you got through previous bad times, you will get through this too. You are the same person who survived all kinds of adversity. We will prevail...

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**Additional Information:**

Maryland OUTloud is published monthly and distributed throughout Maryland and southern central Pennsylvania.

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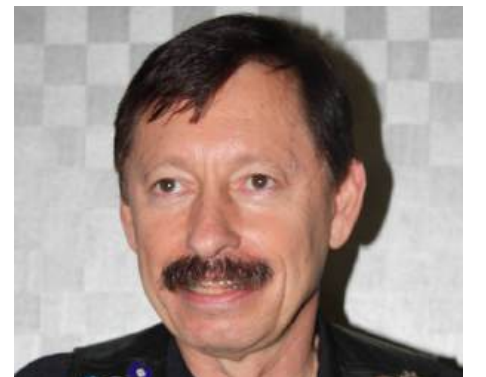
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visit [browndowntown.org](https://www.browndowntown.org) for more information

## Leather Line - The Leather Community Is a Trip!

By Rodney Burger



Over the many years that I have been involved in the leather community, I have enjoyed countless fun times and have met so many wonderful and interesting people. In addition to that, I often think about the many places I have visited to attend leather events. I'm not talking about the places that everyone goes to like New York, Chicago, or San Francisco. Although I love the big cities, it is the smaller events that I will always remember. That time I went to the Mr. Oklahoma Leather Contest in Tulsa (They had an Eagle bar that was in an old McDonalds that had been painted black) or the Tradesmen's leather club's anniversary in Charlotte, North Carolina (It was held during Charlotte Pride). The Southeast Conference of Clubs leather event in Augusta, Georgia was so much fun that I attended several times. I even did stand-up comedy at the contest one year. Have you ever been to Portland, Maine? I attended the Harbor Masters leather club's event there a few years ago. We got there a day early so that we could tour the city. It is always exciting to go to new places and at most leather events you get discount hotel rates and meals included. It is really an inexpensive way to take a break from the real world and have some fun. With that in mind, here are just a few leather events that you may want to check out this fall.

How about a trip to New Haven, Connecticut? On September 5th - 7th you can attend the Mr. and Ms. Connecticut Leather 2026 Contest at the 168 York Street Café. There is also a pet mosh, BDSM classes, cigar social, Sunday brunch, and more. You can find details at [mrcl Leather.org](https://www.mrcl Leather.org) and on Facebook.



You can really get away at The Woods Campground in Lehigh, Pennsylvania. Their title contest leather weekend is scheduled for September 12th -14th when Mr. Woods Leather, Ms. Woods Leather, and Woods Pup will be selected. You don't have tents and a bunch of camping gear? No problem. Reserve quickly and get one of the little cabins. Go to [thewoodscampground.com](https://www.thewoodscampground.com).

Want to get away a little further? The Hoist Pig Weekend is scheduled for October 3rd - 5th at the Whispering Oaks Retreat and Campground in Hampshire, Tennessee. Once again you can book a cabin, stay in the bunkhouse, or even a motel. There will be catered meals, cocktail parties, a cigar social, dungeon play, demos, and the MidSouth Kink Leather Sir/boy Contest. Go to [hoistmemphis.org](https://www.hoistmemphis.org) for details.

Although the big Mid-Atlantic Leather weekend in Washington is not until January 16th - 19th, 2026, you can watch one of the MAL contestants being selected when you attend the 7th annual Mr. NC Triangle Leather contest at the FLEX Night Club in Raleigh, North Carolina on August 30th. There is cocktail party sponsored by Carolinas Leather Men of Color, a victory jockstrap party and more. Details can be found at [mrnctrianglerleather.com](https://www.mrnctrianglerleather.com) and on Facebook.

In nearby Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, Rehoboth Leather Weekend is scheduled for

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What is Pride Continued

Liz Fairfax, Administrative Assistant

When you think of Pride, it's easy to think of the big things: We're here, we're queer, we're in your face, we're proud at full volume! It is, however, easy to discount the quiet sort of Pride that dwells within each and every one of us, the proud certainty of who we are in spite of what others may see when they look at us.

Sometimes Pride is catching the glance of the teen with the trans pride pin and giving them a wink and a knowing smile that says, "I see you. I see you, and I'm proud of who you are."

Sometimes Pride is two old friends meeting at the site of an old adult theatre and knowing that the movies were only half the fun.

Sometimes Pride is what you hold in the pit of your stomach when the world seems to be against you, keeping you warm against the coldness of the world. Pride is in all we do, even the subterfuge, codewords, and stolen glances—an entire language of signs all our own to be proud of, and to show, in our own words, on our own terms, who we are!

Ray Moneypenny, Staff Therapist

Pride to me is the antidote to shame. For many LGBTQ+ people, we've been told all our lives to be ashamed of who we are, who we love, or the ways we do not fit into the expectations of our heteronormative society. We've been taught to hide in plain sight, and to quiet the parts of ourselves that might not be accepted. Pride is a month, a parade, a party—but it's also a powerful and necessary statement, a balm. Pride is a reminder to release the shame that we have been taught, and to celebrate ourselves and each other for having the courage to be free.

Sailor, Trans Care Navigator

During Pride, I am one of the introverts smiling to see other queer+ people who are loud and expressive, and also introverts who are people-watching, claiming space, and open to connection.

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Leather Line Continued

October 3rd – 5th. You can attend the Mr. Rehoboth Leather Contest at Aqua bar.

We are living in stressful times. I know I feel better when I've scheduled a little trip and have something to look forward to on my calendar. Make some plans to get away. These are just a few of the many leather events coming up soon. The leather community can be a trip! Plan one.

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