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Annapolis Pride and Teachers' Association of Anne Arundel County Condemn Homophobic + Transphobic Speech by School Board Candidate

As educators and community leaders, we were angered to learn of homophobic and transphobic comments made by Board of Education candidate LaToya Nkongolo at a fundraiser on June 22.

In her remarks, Nkongolo:

- **Referred to being LGBTQ as a “lifestyle” and a “mental illness;”**
- **Called Anne Arundel County Public Schools an “institution of grooming”** and further claimed that teachers are attempting to “influence our kids” to “cause sexual confusion;” and
- **Misgendered trans youth** while making fearmongering arguments against trans acceptance and spreading narratives that put trans youth at risk.

You can watch the full video of her remarks at bit.ly/LaToyaVideo.

To be clear: this kind of hateful speech is unacceptable, and it's not who we are in Anne Arundel County.

Being gay, transgender, or gender non-confirming isn't a choice. It's inappropriate to refer to it as a “lifestyle” and deeply wrong and discriminatory to refer to it as a “mental illness” when the American Psychological Association declassified it as such in 1973. It's especially irresponsible for Nkongolo to make these comments as a self-proclaimed “mental health expert.”

The baseless conspiracy theory that our schools are an “institution of grooming” where teachers attempt to influence young children's sexuality is disrespectful and dangerous to educators. Teachers in Anne Arundel County Public Schools work hard to provide an excellent education to kids as well as to keep them safe. Most parents and voters know the truth: accepting and welcoming every student for who they are isn't “grooming,” rather, it's basic respect and common sense.

Demonizing trans youth as a scare tactic to win a campaign—using language that paints them as a threat to safety and privacy while misgendering them—is offensive and harmful. Trans youth are at the highest risk of bullying, poor mental well-being, and suicide. Adults shouldn't join in on the bullying.

We call on Nkongolo to apologize for her homophobic and transphobic comments. We also hope all candidates, elected officials, and community leaders will join us in making it clear that these comments are inappropriate and work against the goal of building schools where every student can belong, grow, and succeed.