

Nearly 100 show up for trans pride event, outnumbering protesters

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Joe Toolan, chair of Annapolis Pride and a member of the Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, stands outside the Glen Burnie branch of the Anne Arundel County Public Library on Monday.

As protesters and counterprotesters jeered back and forth outside the Glen Burnie branch of the Anne Arundel County Public Library, about 100 attendees of its Trans Pride Party carried on unfazed.

Teens and families colored, played games, and created pins and friendship bracelets amid the sounds of a Spotify playlist filled with transgender and gender-nonconforming artists.

Among them were Cheryl Beans and her 12-year-old queer nephew. Beans commuted from Prince George's County during rush hour for the event.

Beans said she thought the library would be a good place to find some peers for her nephew — which is why they made the drive from Beltsville.

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Beans said she wants to find her nephew, who she is raising, an LGBTQIA+ teen group that regularly meets so he can talk to his peers.

“This is new to me, but I’m accepting it.”

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Outside, about a dozen people sporting faith-based and patriotic attire showed up to protest the party.

And over three-dozen counterprotesters donning LGBTQIA+ pride gear met them.

Teal Quinn of Carroll County drove about 45 minutes with her husband and their nonbinary 14-year-old child to stand in solidarity with the counterprotesters.

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When texting her sister around 4:30 p.m. about what Quinn’s sign should say, they landed on, “I love my non-binary child.”

Quinn was pleasantly surprised by the number of people who showed up.

“I was very surprised that there were so many people here,” she said. “It gives me hope for the state of things.”



About a dozen people sporting faith-based and patriotic attire showed up to protest the event at the library; over three dozen counterprotesters wearing LGBTQIA+ Pride gear met them. (Anne Arundel County Public Library)

The Maryland Republican Party called for a protest of the library's event "to stand up against the public indoctrination of children with radical gender ideology," the group said in a post on social media. March 31, the day of the library event, protest and counterprotest, is International Transgender Day of Visibility.

Officials from Maryland Republican Party did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

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Protesters outside the library said they were concerned the event was advertised for toddlers and children. Tim Walters, the pastor of a church in Anne Arundel County, attended Monday's protest to have discussions and stand in opposition to what was happening, he said.

"Children should be children, point blank," Walters said. "We shouldn't let our children be exposed to anything sexual at this age."

Anne Arundel County Public Library CEO Skip Auld, who came about halfway through the event, said the day was primarily promoted for teens and families, but they didn't want to exclude young kids.

The number of people who showed up as counterprotesters made him feel great, he said, as they signified to him the supported for the library, transgender youth and the LGBTQ community in Anne Arundel County. Auld said protests won't deter their commitment to equity.

"We have a longstanding commitment to be supportive of everyone in our community," he said. "We will stand tall. We will not back down from doing these types of events."

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Christine Feldmann, spokesperson for the library system, said they coordinated with police to ensure things went smoothly.

She expressed disappointment in the Republican party's claims about the library event.

"Claims that this event is an attempt at 'public indoctrination' are simply false. Instead, the gathering will provide vital support for a vulnerable community facing attacks of their very existence from the highest levels of government," Feldmann said in an email. "The library is a place where everyone belongs, and we will continue to uphold that mission."

Joe Toolan, chair of Annapolis Pride and a member Maryland Commission on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, was already heading to the library for the Trans Pride Party. His focus shifted toward assisting counterprotesters, but his motive remained the same: showing young people what he didn't see when he was growing up in Anne Arundel County.

"We're saving the youth of our community and helping them see that they are loved and cared for," Toolan said. "I don't think I ever saw in my future a space like what we have today."

Darreonna Davis is an express desk reporter at The Baltimore Banner. She previously reported at the intersection of gender, politics, health and economic policy as a fellow for the 19th News.