January 6, 2017

The Honorable Bob Marshall
General Assembly Building
PO Box 406
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Delegate Marshall:

On behalf of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) and the Potomac and Chesapeake Association for College Admission Counseling (PCACAC), we want to express our concern with House Bill 1612, the Physical Privacy Act, which was prefiled on January 3, 2017. Our associations represent more than 15,000 high school counselors and college and university admission officers. We are concerned that the Physical Privacy Act encourages discrimination against individuals based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, which stands in contrast to our associations’ core principles. This bill has consequences that can affect the lives of both students and professionals in an educational setting.

Founded in 1937, NACAC is committed to maintain professional standards that foster ethical and social responsibility among those involved in the college application and enrollment process, as outlined in the NACAC Statement of Principles of Good Practice (SPGP). Through our advocacy efforts, we are also dedicated to ensuring all students have access to high quality school counseling to help them make informed decisions as they prepare for and pursue college or career options. PCACAC is one of NACAC’s 23 state and regional affiliates.

The SPGP, the cornerstone of our organizations, specifically states: Member schools, colleges and universities, as well as other institutions, organizations and individuals dedicated to the pursuit of higher education, believe in the dignity, worth and potential of each and every student. To enable all students to make the dream of higher education a reality, these institutions and individuals develop and provide programs and services in postsecondary counseling, admission and financial aid. They strive to eliminate bias within the education system based on ethnicity, creed, gender, sexual orientation, age, political affiliation, national origin, and disability. They understand and value the importance of college counseling and view it as a fundamental aspect of their job as educators.
We are concerned that the Physical Privacy Act, if enacted, would allow students and college admission counseling professionals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender (LGBT) and others to be discriminated against, which will negatively affect their educational and professional aspirations. Furthermore, some individuals or businesses may use this legislation to deny postsecondary counseling services or admission to a college based on an individual’s gender identity and sexual orientation – or even personal belief.

Our views are unequivocal and codified in our Statement of Principles of Good Practice. We are disappointed that you would propose this legislation. We urge the Virginia General Assembly to oppose the bill, should it come up for a vote, and support policies that make clear that Virginia does not support discrimination in any form.

Please contact NACAC’s Associate Director for Government Relations Michael Rose (mrose@nacacnet.org) if you need additional information or have any questions about our legislative priorities.

Sincerely,

Joyce Smith
Chief Executive Officer
NACAC

CC: Virginia General Assembly