



March 22, 2023

Attn: Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson and Members of the Committee:

Re: Senate Bill 99 with the -2 Amendment

Dear Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson and Committee Members,

On behalf of Washington County Department of Health and Human Services, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to offer comment in strong support of Senate Bill 99 with the -2 Amendment.

The LGTQIA2S+ Bill of Rights for Older Adults will help provide protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and HIV status in long-term care settings as well as improve access and equity to State programs and services. This bill establishes a Commission to examine gaps in services, gaps in equity and how access can be improved.

The LGTQIA2S+ Bill of Rights for Older Adults was developed as an outcome from the 2021 Oregon LGBTQ+ Older Adult Survey. This survey was created and administered through extensive input by stakeholders, consumers, individuals with lived experience and individuals who identify with this community. Survey findings included:

- 60% of respondents experienced discrimination within the last year, and up to 94% of people of color experience discrimination'
- 24% of respondents experience abuse in the past year and 76% did not report it to the authorities.

Further, this legislation is necessary because:

- LGBTQIA2S+ older adults rely more heavily on community service providers for care as they age because they are more likely to live alone and less likely to rely on adult children or other family members for informal caregiving and support,
- 50% of people living with HIV in the United State are 50 or older,
- 70% of LGBTQIA2S+ older adults fear having to "re-closet" themselves when seeking housing with services.

While Oregon's Human Rights law includes non-discrimination protections including those based on gender identity and sexual orientation, long-term care facilities and their staff are not always clear on how to provide respectful and appropriate care to LGBTQ+ older people. Issuing clear and accessible guidance under SB99 with -2 amendment would ensure that the provider and their staff are trained in the needs of LGBTQ+ older adults and older adults living with HIV and arm LGBTQ+ residents with a strong tool for self-advocacy if the guidance is not being followed.

Department of Health and Human Services • HHS Director's Office

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SB99 with the -2 amendment is a critical step to help Oregon's LGBTQIA2S+ older adults be recognized, safe and protected regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and HIV status.

Washington County urges your support of SB99 with -2 amendments. Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'ms', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mjere Simantel, MSW

Director, Department of Health and Human Services

Washington County