

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF AGING

LONG-TERM CARE COUNCIL

EST. 2015

October 7, 2019

Dear Members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly:

I am writing on behalf of the Pennsylvania Long-Term Care Council (LTCC) to urge your support of House Bill 1404 and Senate Bills 224 and 614, which would amend the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. The LTCC unanimously voted to endorse this legislation during its recent meeting and to urge swift passage by the General Assembly.

Pennsylvania's greatest strength lies in our diversity. However, LGBTQ residents do not have full equality under state law as the commonwealth still lacks comprehensive statewide discrimination protection. Studies show that LGBTQ older adults are twice as likely as other seniors to be single and live alone, half as likely to have close relatives to call for help, and four times less likely to have children to provide care. In addition, LGBTQ older adults are less likely to access crucial services and supports due to concerns of discrimination and harassment, leading to greater social isolation and adverse health outcomes. This results in increased costs to taxpayers given the health impacts of prolonged isolation and the increased acuity needs of residents who forgo care and treatment until they face a major health crisis. Statewide non-discrimination protection would reduce the fear many LGBTQ older adults and individuals with disabilities have about being mistreated or denied access to long-term services and supports, housing, and other accommodations.

A statewide non-discrimination law would also allow better data to be collected on LGBTQ Pennsylvanians. Currently, many LGBTQ individuals are reluctant to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity or expression out of fear of who might see this information and the potential repercussions. This is especially true for LGBTQ older adults who have lived most of their lives navigating systems that required them to hide their identities in order to be treated fairly. The outcome is that the LGBTQ population is undercounted, which leads to care, services, and supports that are not person-centered and culturally competent and, in turn, contributes to healthcare disparities across systems and programs.

All Pennsylvanians deserve to live and age with dignity and respect. The LTCC respectfully requests your support in ensuring the prompt passage of House Bill 1404 and Senate Bills 224 and 614 so all Pennsylvanians have equal protection under the law.

Sincerely,



Charles W. Quinnan
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Long-Term Care Council