

June 21, 2023



Chair Fahey and Members of the Committee:

Please consider this testimony in support of SB 99 A on behalf of the Oregon LGBTQ+ Aging Coalition.

The Oregon LGBTQ+ Aging Coalition is a statewide Coalition composed of representatives from public and private organizations, adults age 50+ and others from across the state who support and are committed to improving the well-being of older LGBTQ+ Oregonians through research, education and advocacy efforts.

SB 99 A establishes a bill of rights in long-term care and communities-based facilities which will help provide protections from discrimination on the basis of 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. The bill also establishes a LGBTQIA2S+ Subcommittee of The Governor's Commission on Senior Services to identify gaps and barriers to services.

The bill was developed as an outcome from the 2021 Oregon LGBTQ+ Older Adult Survey and through extensive input by stakeholders, consumers, individuals with lived experience and individuals who identify with this community. This bill has also been under development for over a year, and again, with extensive stakeholder input.

It's important to know Oregon will not be setting a new precedent with the passage of SB 99 A. Other states and municipalities, including New Jersey, Illinois, California, Massachusetts, Washington DC, and Montgomery County, Maryland have established similar laws.

Why is this bill needed? Because I, my brother, sister and her wife, friends and other older and aging LGBTQIA2S+ adults and adults living with HIV in Oregonian deserve to be able to be themselves, love who they love and have safe, equitable access to care and services without the threat of discrimination, denial of services or worse - abuse. We also need to have the ability to ensure enforcement.

There is relevant data from a number of reports and surveys, including our state survey and AARP surveys. Below are just a few stunning reasons why SB 99 A is needed from the 2015 Justice in Aging LGBTQ adults in Long-Term Care Facilities Report:

- 89% predicted that staff would discriminate against an out LGBTQ+ person
- 53% thought that staff would neglect or abuse the out LGBTQ+ person
- 43% reported mistreatment, including verbal or physical harassment from other residents, refused admission, re-admission, discharged and other types of mistreatment.

SB 99 A is a first step to help Oregon's older adults be safe, recognized and protected regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or HIV status.

Thank you, Chair Fahey and Members of the Committee.

Liz James
Chair, Oregon LGBTQ+ Aging Coalition