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Submitter: Max Micozzi, Oregon resident

To: Senate Committee On Human Services

Measure: SB99 Letter of support

Dear SCHS committee members,

As an Oregonian, And an aging member of the LGBTQ+ community I urge the committee to support and vote in favor of SB 99. In very recent years a statewide survey for LGBT+ older adults resulted in over 1400 responses from throughout the state. It revealed some very troubling barriers that these older adults are experiencing when trying to access services that they are eligible for. Here is a link that provides some outcome statistics for your review https://goldseninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Oregon-LGBTQ-Older-Adult-Survey_Fact-Sheet.pdf.

I have been working within older adult services and healthcare systems for quite some time and I see an opportunity for Oregon to lead the way with SB 99 that establishes advocacy, guidelines for care providers that will enhance their knowledge and improve systems to be better stewards of supporting diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. And by lowering barriers that LGBTQ+ older adults are experiencing in Oregon- both rural, urban and suburban settings. Health disparities, financial barriers and lack of traditional family support have made this population much more vulnerable to their heterosexual counterparts as they age. Many do not seek out healthcare until they are in an emergency situation just to avoid sharing or feeling unsafe in traditional settings as it relates to their sexual orientation and /or and especially gender identity. In these traditional settings for older adults many of these elders do not feel welcome by staff and or residents or members.

Those who need to move from independent living to other levels of care have very few options due to their income and location. When these LGBT+ older adults become eligible for Medicaid and need to access Oregon's over 400 adult foster care home locations they encounter homophobia, transphobia and in some cases blatant discrimination and prejudice from staff members and/or other residents and their family members. Elder abuse cases are reported and many seniors keep silent to avoid retaliation if they do report. And the most upsetting part of this is that many of these elders were and are LGBTQ+ advocates and paved the way for where we are today as it relates to equal rights for LGBTQ+ people and now they experience discrimination and prejudice in their older years.

These are just some of the issues that SB 99 broadly covers and this is an opportunity for Oregon to help lead the way for equal rights for LGBTQ+ elders.

Please support SB99 and thank you for your consideration.

Max Micozzi, Portland Or