

3/20/2023

Submitter: Bev Balliett, 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.

I have worked within older adult services and healthcare systems in the past and have seen the toll taken on the aging LGBTQ+ community when forced by necessity to deny their own identities and the community which has supported them, from fear for their physical safety and to avoid discrimination, conversion attempts and mental and bodily harm.

The aging LGBTQ+ community of Oregon would gain needed protections 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.

Financial barriers and lack of traditional family support have made this population much more vulnerable than their heterosexual counterparts as they age and require care. Many ignore healthcare problems until forced into an emergency situation for fear of discrimination and condemnation if they reveal their true selves - their sexual orientation and /or gender identity.

When these LGBT+ older adults need to move from independent living to other levels of care, they have very few options due to their income and location. When they become eligible for Medicaid and need to access adult foster care home locations they encounter homophobia, transphobia and in some cases malicious 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.

Many of these elders now struggling with the aforementioned liabilities are the LGBTQ+ advocates who have paved the way for their communities to claim equal rights for LGBTQ+ people and now they must face discrimination and prejudice in their older years.

This is an opportunity for Oregon to help lead the way for equal rights for LGBTQ+ elders by lowering barriers that LGBTQ+ older adults are experiencing in Oregon..

Please support SB99 and thank you for your consideration. Bev Balliett, Portland Or