

**Testimony Concerning HB 706**  
**“Commission on LGBTQ Affairs in the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives”**  
**Introduced on January 30, 2020**  
**Hearing on February 25 to the House Health and Government Operations Committee**

**Position: Support**

Dear Health and Government Operations Committee,

My personal experience working in health care has shown me that the LGBTQ community is vast and present yet, discounted and discriminates against often. When working on a research project that focused on the LGBTQ community, my colleagues and I found a complete lack of data collected on the community, which made it impossible to accurately assess the communities needs and health disparities.

The State Commission proposed in House Bill 0706 would allow us to close this knowledge gap and finally have a good understanding of the LGBTQ population in our state and how we can best serve them. A group that has been discriminated against in so many ways and has remained invisible in the eyes of data collectors and researchers will hopefully become visible and therefore part of public policy. As a state we need to lead the way in passing bills and creating policies that support equality and human rights. The LGBTQ community needs to be equally counted and included so that policy can protect them.

My hope is that data collection will lead to clear understanding of the need for education and training provided to health care providers on how to best care for this population.

Thank you for your consideration.

Roya Tavakolian  
MSN Entry Program into Practice, Summer 2020  
Johns Hopkins School of Nursing