

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 name is Michelle Charron Mele, RN, MSN/MPH, and I support the creation of a commission on LGBTQ affairs in the Governor’s office of community initiatives.

Research shows that LGBTQ people face disproportionately high rates of suicide and homelessness. They are frequently the victims of violence. They are often discriminated against in the workplace, schools, and healthcare settings. The formation of this committee will help to bridge the gaps in discrimination that the LGBTQ community in Maryland faces, by placing well-informed key stakeholders in the Governor’s Office of Community Initiatives.

Additionally, this Commission would be charged with data collection from state agencies that could help better describe the challenges that members of this community face. This data is needed.

Over the last six months I have had the honor of working with nursing students in their Public Health Nursing course at the clinical site of Chase Brexton Healthcare LGBTQ Resource Center. I have developed relationships with students and clients who identify as members of the LGBT community. While I am an ally to this community, my experiences in this role have brought me a new perspective on the unmet needs of the LGBTQ community in Maryland. I assure you that without representation in the state capital in the form of a Commission on LGBTQ affairs, the marginalization of this population will continue. Key stakeholders for the community must be consulted.

I urge you to support House Bill 706 to establish a commission on LGBTQ affairs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Michelle Mele, RN, MSN/MPH
Clinical Instructor, Public Health Nursing
Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing