

Testimony Concerning HB 1010
“Health Care Facilities – Discrimination (LGBTQ Senior Bill of Rights)”
Submitted to The House Health and Government Operations Committee
March 5, 2020

Position: Support

Dear Health and Government Operations Committee,

My name is Mariel Villanueva, I am a student nurse from Johns Hopkins School of Nursing currently working Chase Brexton, Baltimore, MD for my Public Health clinical. We work with the Resource Center that provides community and health resources for LGBT+ patients for Chase Brexton and we have been fortunate enough to work with the LGBT+ elders of this group.

During our time, we have been able to interview various LGBT+ elders who have been gracious enough to speak on their experiences as an LGBT+ elder and seeking healthcare. One such elder, Louis H. has provided his testimony to go on record of experiencing discrimination in health care:

In the early 80s, Louis went to a doctors appointment to be scanned for venereal diseases. At the time, he had disclosed himself as homosexual and the doctor did not have the knowledge to identify common areas of screening for a heterosexual male vs. homosexual male and thus failed to screen him for common STDs, leading to Louis not being treated for his unidentified STD. At the time, Louis assumed he had hemorrhoids. Consequently, he had unknowingly given the STD to a partner who had later gotten himself tested to find that he had gonorrhea.

When going to the doctor and disclosing homosexuality, Louis was not given the proper diagnosis and treatment. This poses much more devastating public health risks if the condition was syphilis or HIV. Louis had realized then that disclosing his homosexual status was not enough for proper treatment, he saw the need for a gay mans VD clinic, which has since evolved to Chase Brexton.

Discrimination in health care or inability to provide affirming and knowledgeable health care for this patient population is an ethical dilemma and LGBTQ elders are being robbed of their right to proper treatment. Without proper screening measures, these patients will not have a proper diagnoses, and are thus untreated.

I urge you to support House Bill 1010 to protect LGBTQ seniors from discrimination and to provide both affirming and ethical health care that is a basic right for all people.

Thank you for your consideration.