

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

I, Laura Pratt, enthusiastically support HB 1010, which would promote the LGBT+ Senior Bill of Rights and prohibit certain facilities or certain staff from discriminating against certain individuals or residents on certain bases.

I am a volunteer, a mentor, and an advocate for the LGBT+ community in Baltimore and beyond. I have spoken to crowds of healthcare professionals about comprehensive care and traveled to Annapolis to advocate for non-discrimination legislation. I volunteer as a receptionist at an LGBT+ Mental Health organization in Baltimore and I facilitate a trans femme group the second Saturday of each month. I am a part of a vast online support system and frequently connect my peers in crisis with resources like the Trans Lifeline.

I advocate for all under the LGBT+ spectrum, not just transgender people, because I want to give back to the LGBT+ community as a whole. I work to give others a hand up so that they don't have to go through what I did when they come out. I am proud of who I am, and I am proud of all LGBT+ people. We've all faced some type of setback just because of who we are.

In 2015, at the age of 54, I came out to my family as a woman. I was promptly disowned and made to leave my home. I immediately connected with the Baltimore Crisis Center and was treated very well. At Baltimore Crisis Center my pronouns were respected and I was given my own room. I cannot emphasize how meaningful this was for me. Unfortunately, due to scarcity of housing resources in Baltimore I was relocated by my case worker to a series of Board and Care homes. These were places I wouldn't put my worst enemies. In the first boarding home, despite insisting that I be housed with other women, I was placed in quarters with three men. There I was robbed and sexually assaulted. When law enforcement was summoned to the scene, the owner of the facility sent them away and left me abandoned. Devastatingly, my experience of discrimination and violence in healthcare housing situations is not unique.

While my experiences in these healthcare and housing facilities were some of the saddest points in my life; my transition has been the happiest time in my life. I stand in support of HB 1010 because it speaks to my experience. Unregulated health care and housing facilities require regulation such as this as well as trained professionals. Protecting LGBTQ+ elders like myself in health care facilities by ensuring their pronouns are respected and that they are roomed with others of their gender is a lifesaving intervention.

Thank you for your consideration.