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March 9, 2021

To: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

From: The Office of the Attorney General, Health Education and Advocacy Unit

Re: House Bill 1118 (Health Care Facilities – Discrimination): Support

The Office of the Attorney General's Health Education and Advocacy Unit (HEAU) supports House Bill 1118, which would prohibit a comprehensive care facility or an extended care facility from discriminating against individuals or residents based on the actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or HIV status of the individuals or residents. Discriminatory acts are defined in the bill as pertaining to admission, room assignments, use of restrooms, use of preferred name or pronouns, resident association, clothing, and denying or restricting medical or nonmedical care, among other acts.

Protecting these rights of the LGBTQ community is an important goal generally, but recognition of these rights is particularly important in a setting where LGBTQ individuals actually live or reside. In one study, “[a]pproximately 14% of transgender people reported they were denied equal treatment or service and experienced verbal harassments and physical attacks from staff in [long term care] facilities for being perceived as transgender.” See James S. E., Herman J. L., Rankin S., Keisling M., Mottet L., & Anafi M. (2016), <https://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/USTS-Full-Report-FINAL.PDF>

We ask the committee for a favorable report because we believe the right to be treated with dignity, respect and professionalism by providers and staff in an individual's place of residence is, or should be, a fundamental element of a facility's care and treatment of its resident population.

cc: Sponsor