

**Testimony Favorable for Bill 28-20, Human Rights and Civil Liberties – Discrimination in Public Accommodations – LGBTQ Bill of Rights**

Council President Katz and esteemed members of the Montgomery County Council: my name is Samantha Jones and I am the President of the LGBTQ Democrats of Montgomery County. My pronouns are she/her/hers. On behalf of our club, I am submitting this testimony **in full support of Councilmember Glass’s Bill 28-20, Human Rights and Civil Liberties – Discrimination in Public Accommodations – LGBTQ Bill of Rights.**

The LGBTQ Democrats of Montgomery County are dedicated to improving the lives of the LGBTQ people who live, work, and study in Montgomery County. We strongly believe that transgender, nonbinary, and gender-expansive people, as well as those living with HIV, must be protected from discrimination in care facilities and other public accommodations.

Bill 28-20 seeks to prohibit discrimination specifically on the basis of gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and HIV status. The most vulnerable members of the LGBTQ community, transgender and nonbinary people, routinely face these exact types of discrimination when seeking care. This discrimination is prominent all over the country, and Maryland and Montgomery County are no exceptions. In a 2018 study, Human Rights Watch reported that LGBTQ people face higher barriers to accessing health care, and that many of us have difficulty finding providers who will treat us without passing judgment. Many of us, and trans folks especially, have difficulty finding health care providers who will offer treatment at all.

Additionally, according to the 2015 U.S. Trans Survey, 14% of trans people in nursing homes or other extended care facilities were denied equal treatment or service, verbally harassed, or physically attacked simply because of who they are. Anti-LGBTQ discrimination is a real problem, and must be addressed through legislation such as Bill 28-20.

As LGBTQ people age and require care in nursing homes or other care facilities, the justifiable concern over discrimination increases. Our LGBTQ elders must be able to seek affirming care in these facilities without the fear of being misgendered, mistreated, harassed, neglected, or abused due to their identity. LGBTQ seniors are particularly vulnerable to discrimination in nursing homes because they are often unable to advocate for themselves. One of the most common forms of discrimination is the intentional misgendering of trans and nonbinary people, which is harmful on every level. Bill 28-20 explicitly prohibits this form of discrimination, and provides protections against other senseless forms of discrimination that LGBTQ folks face when they are at their most vulnerable.

Similarly, too many care facilities discriminate against LGBTQ people by disallowing same-gender partners to continue living as a married couple and instead disrespectfully referring to them as “friends.” Imagine being in a nursing home with your partner and being unable to support them, be openly affectionate with them, or authentically refer to your relationship without fear of harassment or violence from facility staff members. This

discrimination is not just limited to patients of care facilities either. Often, LGBTQ adult children caretakers and their partners or spouses face similar discrimination when trying to visit their parents or relatives in care facilities. Anti-LGBTQ discrimination in care facilities can harm multiple generations of families and must be stopped.

Out of consideration for the mental health, physical health, and equitable treatment of LGBTQ individuals, the LGBTQ Democrats of Montgomery County strongly urges a favorable vote on Bill 28-20, Human Rights and Civil Liberties – Discrimination in Public Accommodations – LGBTQ Bill of Rights.

Thank you,

Samantha Jones, Esq.  
President  
LGBTQ Democrats of Montgomery County  
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