

SPECIAL  
LEGISLATIVE  
COMMISSION ON  
LESBIAN, GAY,  
BISexual AND  
TRANSGENDER  
AGING



Senator Barbara L'Italien  
Representative Danielle Gregoire  
Chairs, Joint Committee on Elder Affairs  
Massachusetts State House  
Boston Massachusetts

October 11, 2017

Dear Joint Committee on Elder Affairs Chairs L'Italien and Gregoire,

As members of the Massachusetts LGBT Aging Commission we write in support of  
**H.2892/S.346 "An Act Relative to LGBT Awareness Training for Aging Service Providers."**

In 2015 the "Special Legislative Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Aging: Report to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts" estimated approximately 65,000 LGBT older adults living in Massachusetts, a number that continues to grow as the baby boomer generation ages. In order to best meet the needs of this growing population the Commission identified LGBT cultural competency training for elder service providers as an overarching recommendation. This training will ensure that all elder care providers have the opportunity to learn the importance of and the skills to be inclusive of LGBT older adults and caregivers within Massachusetts' elder care system.

Studies have shown that LGBT older adults are reluctant to engage with mainstream aging services – a lifetime of discrimination leads many to assume that such treatment awaits them in eldercare. Delayed engagement in healthcare and services has poorer outcomes for physical and mental health.

That doesn't have to be the case here in Massachusetts. We are a leader in comprehensive eldercare for Massachusetts' older adults. The establishment of the LGBT Aging Commission illustrates the Commonwealth's commitment to providing the best possible services to LGBT older adults and caregivers within that network of care. Training elder care providers benefits the providers themselves as well as the LGBT elders they serve. As noted by a recent LGBT cultural competency training participant "It is an area not covered ... Our clients deserve to be understood and to feel known as they wish to be. I will be better able to provide helpful services now."

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Although some elder care providers have chosen to participate in LGBT cultural competency training, there is no consistency across the state and an LGBT elder cannot be assured of LGBT inclusive care regardless of where they live. As a Commission comprised of members from across the state we feel it is imperative that any and all LGBT older adults and caregivers have the assurance that their care providers have been trained in non-discriminatory and affirming care.

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We respectfully urge the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs to favorably report out **H.2892/S.346 “An Act Relative to LGBT Awareness Training for Aging Service Providers”** in order to set a standard for LGBT cultural competency training throughout the Massachusetts eldercare network. Doing so would reassure LGBT older adults and caregivers that Massachusetts’ elder care providers are ready and able to treat them with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Thank you.

LGBT Aging Project – Lisa Krinsky  
GLBT Legal Advocates and Defenders – Janson Wu  
New England Association of HIV and Aging – Lenny Alberts  
MassEquality – Deborah Shields  
Mass Home Care – Dale Mitchell  
AARP of Massachusetts -- Barrie Atkin  
Massachusetts Councils on Aging – David Stevens  
Massachusetts Senior Care Association- Bill Bogdanovich  
Home Care Aide Council – Lisa Gurgone  
LGBT Public Policy Expert – Sean Cahill  
Transgender Older Adult (Clinical Psychologist & Attorney)– Alex Coleman  
LGBT Older Adult for Cape Cod – Paul Glass