

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs “LGBTQI+ Senior Bill of Rights” Legislation

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TRENTON – Today, Governor Phil Murphy signed legislation (S2545) to establish specific rights and protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, undesignated/non-binary, questioning, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) older adults and people living with HIV in long-term care facilities.

“Building a stronger and fairer New Jersey starts with ensuring that every individual is given the right to live their truth openly and freely,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Today’s bill signing underscores this commitment to our LGBTQI+ older adults and people living with HIV in long-term care facilities by providing critical protections from discrimination. No one should ever feel ashamed for who they are, and everyone should be able to live with the dignity and equality that they deserve.”

“This new civil rights law ensures that LGBTQI+ residents in long-term care facilities have equitable access to health care and provides the same legal protections as everyone else regardless of their sexual orientation or health status,” **said Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli**.

“A long-term care facility is a health care setting, but it’s also someone’s home,” **said Human Services Acting Commissioner Sarah Adelman**. “Every person deserves to feel safe, respected, and comfortable where they receive their medical care, and especially in the place they call home. This law is an important step in New Jersey’s continued protection and support of LGBTQI+ individuals throughout their lifespans, including persons with medical conditions and disabilities.”

“This law will provide much needed protections for LGBTQI+ and people living with HIV in long-term care,” **said New Jersey Long-Term Care Ombudsman Laurie Facciarossa Brewer**. “Too often we see LGBTQI+ people going back in the closet when they go into long term care, out of legitimate fear of discrimination, loss of dignity, and freedom. These protections will ensure that our LGBTQI elders can live free from discrimination in these settings.”

Today’s bill signing outlines the “LGBTQI+ Senior Bill of Rights”, which prohibits long-term care facilities from taking any of the following actions based on a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, intersex status, or HIV status:

1. Denying admission to, transferring, discharging, or evicting a resident;
2. Opposing a request by residents to share a room;
3. Assigning or reassigning a room based on gender;
4. Forbidding a resident from using a restroom based on gender;
5. Repeatedly failing to use a resident’s chosen name or pronouns despite being informed;
6. Denying a resident from wearing clothing, accessories, or cosmetics of their choice;
7. Restricting a resident’s right to engage with other residents or with visitors;
8. Denying, restricting, or providing unequal medical or non-medical care; and
9. Declining to provide any service, care, or reasonable accommodation.

“Many older adults in the LGBTQI+ community have experienced decades of stigma and discrimination. They should not, under any circumstances, feel marginalized in the long-term care center where they deserve to feel at home,” **said Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle**. “We’ve worked tirelessly in New Jersey to protect the rights of LGBTQI+ people, but there’s more we can do to combat discrimination in long-term care facilities and ensure all LGBTQI+ residents may grow older with dignity.”

“Long-term care facilities are supposed to be a haven for the most vulnerable among us. No one should worry that they will experience differential treatment, abuse or neglect because of their gender identity or sexual orientation if they enter long-term care,” **said Assemblyman Nicholas Chiaravalloti**. “This new law is about removing barriers to quality care for all LGBTQI+ residents in our long-term care system.”

“When someone is considering long-term care, the last thing we want is for them to be fearful they will face harassment because they identify as LGBTQI+. This fear may even deter some from going into long-term care in the first place,” **said Assemblywoman Annette Quijano**. “Our goal is to ensure all LGBTQI+ residents feel safe and respected in long-term care facilities, and all receive the highest standard of care.”

“Many older LGBTQI+ adults living in long-term care facilities have been the victims of harassment and neglect by the staff just because of who they are, how they identify, and whether or not they live with HIV,” **said Senator Troy Singleton**. “This callous treatment is despicable and unacceptable. These facilities, their staff, and their residents must understand the rights which protect all members of our society, including the LGBTQI community, without exception. With the signing of this bill, more people will be properly trained and educated about the rights and protections afforded to this community.”

“As someone who represents a large LGBTQI+ community, I was shocked and horrified to learn of the level of neglect and discrimination some seniors face in our long-term care facilities,” **said Senator Vin Gopal**. “We must do better, and make sure all LGBTQI+ residents know their rights so they and their families can hold staff accountable and be afforded the same level of care and treatment as other residents.”

“While the LGBTQI+ community has enjoyed much more support in recent years, they have unfortunately continued to face discrimination in long-term care facilities,” **said Senator Richard Codey**. “This signing will help ensure our LGBTQI+ seniors, especially those living with HIV, receive the high-quality care they deserve, shielding them from the shamefully discriminatory treatment they have been subjected to by administrators and staff.”

“We are thrilled that Governor Murphy is signing the LGBTQ Senior Bill of Rights, which will bring much-needed protections to LGBTQ older adults and seniors living with HIV/AIDS,” **said Christian Fuscarino, Executive Director, Garden State Equality**. “Through our work, we know LGBTQ older adults are at greater risk for social isolation, health issues, and poverty, and often have concerns about living in a long-term care facility. For many, they spent their entire lives fighting for the rights we now enjoy today—they deserve so much better. With this bill signed into law, providers at these facilities will be better equipped to care for these vulnerable populations.”

“This legislation will immortalize much needed protections for our most vulnerable LGBTQI+ residents and those living with HIV,” **said Trenton Mayor W. Reed Gusciora**. “Dignity and respect are just as essential as any other

medical service provided at these facilities. We're thankful that a framework is now in place to help ensure our seniors are granted all the appropriate accommodations regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity so that they can live free of discrimination during their twilight years."

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