

*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

REPRESENTATIVE  
LIZ MALIA

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CHAIR

Committee on Mental Health & Substance Abuse

March 28, 2016

Honorable Brian S. Dempsey, Chair  
House Committee on Ways and Means  
Room 243

Dear Chairman Dempsey:

We, the undersigned co-sponsors and supporters of this legislation, respectfully urge you to favorably report out **H.526, *An Act Relative to LGBT Awareness Training for Aging Services Providers***.

H.526 would require the Executive Office of Elderly Affairs to develop a curriculum for delivery of accessible and appropriate services to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender older adults and caregivers. This curriculum would focus on the prevention and elimination of discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression as well as on improving access to services for LGBT older adults and caregivers. For example, after instituting LGBT training, Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) received more than twice as many requests from LGBT seniors than they had in the year before they provided the training.

Seniors in the LGBT community face a unique set of problems as they age. Ninety percent of LGBT seniors do not have children and 80% age as single persons, so they often lack the familial support systems that can ease the transition into retirement. Furthermore, after facing a lifetime of systemic discrimination based on their identities, many LGBT seniors are reluctant to trust the mainstream institutions that are designed to help people in their situation, such as healthcare providers and government agencies. As a result, many of them avoid seeking assistance at all. Reports show that only 19% of LGBT individuals have reached out to their local senior center.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) elders come from a time period when explicit discrimination from families, employers, landlords, and government were accepted parts of their everyday lives. Their distrust of mainstream institutions (healthcare providers and government agencies), which are in place to help them, results in a reluctance to reveal their identities to professionals. Rather than turn to aging service providers for help, this distrust often leads many to go without, even when sick, the resources and services they require and are entitled to.

We know the elder population is expected to double by 2030, with an estimated 4-8% of the senior population identifying as LGBT, so the need for appropriately trained elder service providers will continue to grow. It is time for Massachusetts to reform its antiquated and ineffective policies around its LGBT elder population. We owe it to this historically marginalized population that has contributed so much to the social advancement of the Commonwealth to grant them the services they deserve.

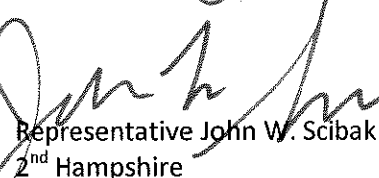
Thank you for your time and attention to this important legislation. We urge you to favorably report out H.526.


Sincerely,


  
Representative Liz Malia  
11<sup>th</sup> Suffolk

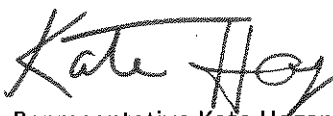
  
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Representative Gloria L. Fox  
7<sup>th</sup> Suffolk


  
Representative John W. Scibak  
2<sup>nd</sup> Hampshire

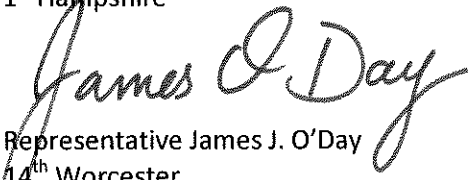
  
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Representative Kate Hogan  
3<sup>rd</sup> Middlesex


  
Representative Paul J. Donato  
35<sup>th</sup> Middlesex

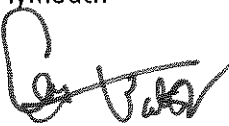
  
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Representative James J. O'Day  
14<sup>th</sup> Worcester

  
Representative Tom Sannicandro  
7<sup>th</sup> Middlesex

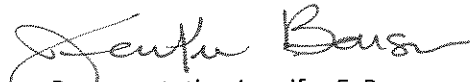
  
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4<sup>th</sup> Plymouth

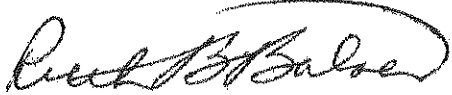
  
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6<sup>th</sup> Middlesex



Representative Frank I. Smizik  
15<sup>th</sup> Norfolk



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12<sup>th</sup> Middlesex



Representative Kay Khan  
11<sup>th</sup> Middlesex



Representative Gailanne Cariddi  
1<sup>st</sup> Berkshire



Representative Louis L. Kafka  
8<sup>th</sup> Norfolk



Representative Paul Brodeur  
32<sup>nd</sup> Middlesex



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23<sup>rd</sup> Middlesex



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21<sup>st</sup> Middlesex



Representative Frank A. Moran  
17<sup>th</sup> Essex



Representative Tackey Chan  
2<sup>nd</sup> Norfolk



Representative Daniel J. Hunt  
13<sup>th</sup> Suffolk



Representative Denise Provost  
27<sup>th</sup> Middlesex



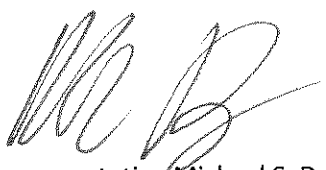
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26<sup>th</sup> Middlesex



Representative Jay D. Livingstone  
8<sup>th</sup> Suffolk



Representative Cory Atkins  
14<sup>th</sup> Middlesex



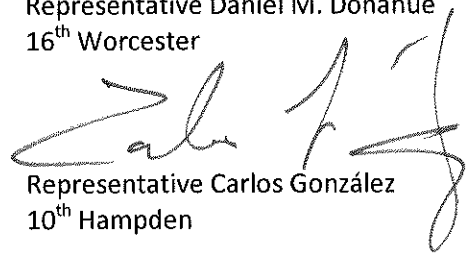
Representative Michael S. Day  
31<sup>st</sup> Middlesex



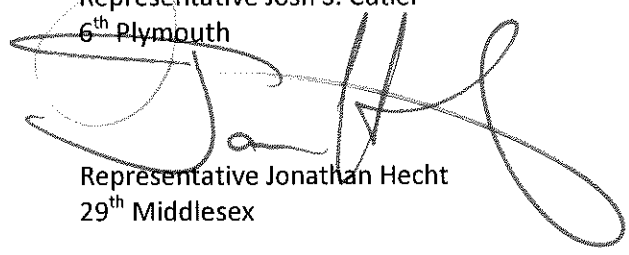
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16<sup>th</sup> Worcester



Representative Josh S. Cutler  
6<sup>th</sup> Plymouth



Representative Carlos González  
10<sup>th</sup> Hampden



Representative Jonathan Hecht  
29<sup>th</sup> Middlesex