

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND



Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

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April 3, 2025

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley, Chairman
House Committee on State Government & Elections
State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: 2025 – HR 6125 – House Resolution Expressing Support For The LGBTQIA+ Community

Dear Chair Shanley:

Please accept this letter of support for House Resolution 6125, which proclaims the solidarity of the RI House of Representatives for Rhode Island's LGBTQIA+ community. As the state's Mental Health and Substance Use Authority, the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) serves all Rhode Islanders, regardless of one's identification along the gender continuum. This is consistent with the BHDDH mission, which states:

BHDDH ensures equitable access to high-quality, person-centered, and safe services for individuals who have differing intellectual/developmental abilities, mental health/substance use disorders, or are in the care of our state facilities.

BHDDH recognizes the elevated rate of suicide risk among the LGBTQIA+ population and the need for prompt access to mental health treatment. The 2024 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ+ young people, ages 13 to 24, conducted by The Trevor Project, uncovered "the reality that there is a significant association between anti-LGBTQ+ victimization and disproportionately high rates of suicide risk..." (<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2024/>).

According to the results of the 2022 Young Adult Survey conducted by BHDDH on a biennial basis, respondents who identified as sexual or gender minorities reported significantly higher than average use of alcohol, cigarettes, ENDS (electronic nicotine delivery systems) products, hallucinogens, and cocaine. Sexual and gender minority respondents also reported significantly higher than average alcohol use disorder, hazardous cannabis use, cannabis use disorder, anxiety, depression, having considered suicide, having made a suicide attempt, and being a victim of sexual violence.

Results from the 2022 RI Student Survey, also conducted biennially by BHDDH, showed that students who identified as sexual or gender minorities were significantly more likely to report current alcohol and cannabis use, to have experienced bullying and violence at school, to feel very sad, and to have considered suicide.

These negative factors, singularly and in combination, increase the risk of experiencing adverse health and social outcomes for these vulnerable populations.

BHDDH is committed to ensuring equitable access to behavioral health services for all Rhode Islanders. The Department recognizes the challenges that face the LGBTQIA+ community and stands ready to serve them with the respect and dignity they deserve. Consistent with these principles, BHDDH provides prevention, treatment and recovery services that recognize and support the unique needs of the LGBTQIA+ community. These investments ultimately will save lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our support of this resolution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Leclerc", written in a cursive style.

Richard Leclerc
Director

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on State Government & Elections
The Honorable Rebecca Kislak
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Lynne Urbani, Director of House Policy