



May 22, 2019

Alan Nevel  
Chief Diversity and Human Resources Officer  
The MetroHealth System  
2500 MetroHealth Drive  
Cleveland, Ohio 44109

Dear Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Minority Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of The MetroHealth System, one of the largest and most comprehensive healthcare systems in Northeast Ohio, I would like to take this opportunity to express our support for SB 11. As the Chief Diversity Officer at The MetroHealth System, I can attest first hand to how we serve a diverse patient population served by a diverse set of employees who play an integral role in providing care and services. Inclusion and Diversity is one of our organization's values and therefore we continue to be committed to serving all patients and employees in a way that is equitable, accessible, and safe within an environment that is welcoming, respectful, and affirming. We do this with employee initiatives such as Preferred Name and Preferred Pronoun and programs on how to become an LGBTQ+ ally through Safe Zone Training that establishes the importance of addressing all people in a way that is conducive to building safe and trusting relationships based on the values of The MetroHealth System.

For twelve years strong, we have had a well-established Employee Resource Group, the Gay Straight Alliance or GSA, which champions internal and external partnerships that advocate for the LGBTQ+ community in events such as marching in the CLE Pride Parade and donation drives to homeless transgender youth through the LGBT Center of Greater Cleveland and many others. In early April, The MetroHealth System hosted its fifth annual Transgender Job Fair so that members of our community have a respectful and affirming place they can come to meet with a variety of employers and industries.

With all patient populations that choose MetroHealth for their health care, we are intentional about identifying gaps so that we can strengthen services for everyone. This includes the LGBTQ+ patients and families that we serve. Because of our best practices in care for the LGBTQ+ community, as members of the Human Rights Campaign, we have been recognized nationally and awarded the Health Equity Index Award two consecutive years meeting 100 percent of the criteria for LGBT health within a health system.



In 2017, we celebrated with the community the 10-year anniversary of the MetroHealth PRIDE Clinic. MetroHealth physicians had heard about LGBT patients experiencing poor care, discrimination and discomfort in health care settings. Some people avoided seeing a doctor unless it was an emergency. Armed with research from around the country, we surveyed the LGBT community about Cuyahoga County gay-friendly medical care. People said they needed a welcoming place to receive primary, mental and hormonal care. We listened, and we used those responses to determine the services we offer.

These services have been so well received (and needed) that over the last few years we expanded the PRIDE Clinic to the PRIDE Network, now offering services at four locations with an expanded provider and service network. Our commitment has not stopped there.

In 2017, we also initiated the Transgender Youth Care Initiative to begin to address barriers and gaps in service for youth who are transgender as well as their families. Families shared with us what we are doing well and provided feedback on things we can do better. As a result, we were able to respond quickly in order to meet our patients' needs. Because of these results we were invited to present at the Office of Patient Experience National conference at the Beryl Institute where we were able to share these practices with other health providers around the country. Additionally, policies such as Access to Gender Based Facilities were created and other policies were updated to better serve everyone.

Why do we do this? Because we are committed to taking the lead in providing exceptional and equitable care for all. It is this commitment to equity and inclusion that enables us to firmly support SB 11.

I urge the Senate to pass SB 11 to protect individuals regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Thank you for your efforts on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Alan Nevel  
Chief Diversity and Human Resources Officer