



east bay community action program
THE BRIDGE TO SELF-RELIANCE

RILWAN K. FEYISITAN, JR.
President & Chief Executive Officer

EAST BAY
COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM

East Providence & Bristol County
Headquarters
The Dennis Roy Building
100 Bullocks Point Avenue
East Providence, RI 02915
P: 401.437.1000
F: 401.223.4459

Newport County Headquarters
Jean E. Hicks Center
19 Broadway
Newport, RI 02840
P: 401.847.7821
F: 401.847.6220

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Judiciary,

It is with a feeling of great hope that I write to you in support of H7577- The Healthcare Provider Shield Act. As President and CEO of East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP), I am proud to know that such an important bill was sponsored by representatives of the communities we serve every day.

EBCAP's mission is to provide high-quality, comprehensive, and accessible health and human services to assist people to achieve their fullest potential. We are proud to provide our community with primary care services, behavioral health services, dental care, Head Start, WIC, a wide range of social services, and most recently, integrated LGBTQ+ healthcare and programming through our Transgender Whole Healthcare Program.

Gallup (2022) estimates the LGBTQIA+ community makes up at least 7.1% of the adult population in the United States- that likely includes more than 77,000 LGBTQIA+ Rhode Islanders who need our support now more than ever. Transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse people are at greater risk than their cisgender counterparts for anxiety, depression, suicide, stroke, heart attack, and early mortality. Recent studies show that not only do transgender people have a significantly shorter life expectancy from all-cause mortality (Hughes et al, 2022), but approximately 47% of transgender and nonbinary young people between ages 13-24 do not believe there is a high chance they will survive to age 35 (Trevor Project, 2023).

While we are doing our best to meet the healthcare needs of this community, in combination with our peers like Thundermist Health Center and Open Door Health, there is a tangible tension in the air. Our patients are living in fear that their healthcare will suddenly be stripped away. Our providers are understandably concerned about attacks on their colleagues in the media and by the governments of un-affirming states. Our Director of Transgender Healthcare frequently shares with

me horror stories of the lives lost to transphobia and the rights rolled back for his community each day across our nation.

It is the firm belief of EBCAP's leadership that our patients and providers deserve robust protections around the vital, lifesaving, best practice healthcare we are discussing today. Healthcare decisions belong in the exam room, between a patient and their provider, who is recognized by our state licensing board as an expert in their field. We have an opportunity here today to take a step forward into a safer future for the LGBTQIA+ community and for the healthcare providers who serve them. We see this act as a strong move toward not only health equity in our communities, but also toward solving the healthcare workforce crisis faced by our state.

Please consider joining us in support of the gender diverse community and in support of our healthcare workforce by enacting H7577.

In Solidarity,

Rilwan Feyisitan Jr., President and CEO, East Bay Community Action Program

