SB 1729 – Senior Care Facilities, Sensitivity Training
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CWA Position – Oppose

Talking Points

1. SB 1729 requires physicians, surgeons, nurses and assistants working in skilled nursing or congregate living health facilities to participate in training programs focusing on sensitivity to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues. The training will be prescribed by the State Department of Public Health with the stated goal of “preventing and eliminating discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.” Sexual orientation is defined as heterosexuality, homosexuality, or bisexuality. Gender identity is defined as “sex, including a person's gender identity and gender related appearance and behavior whether or not stereotypically associated with the person’s assigned sex at birth.” (emphasis added)

2. State law already bans discrimination based on these categories of behavior and “perceived” identity. SB 1729 seeks to go further, based on the assumption that the small percentage of seniors suffering from same-sex attraction or gender confusion would be disrespected and improperly cared for by health care providers and facilities. Clearly, however, the very nature of health care jobs requires a nurturing and sensitive nature that essentially makes such “sensitivity” training unnecessary. SB 1729 is, then, yet another example of the state requiring individuals to set aside their privately-held religious beliefs at the workplace door and force them to attend training contrary to their values.

3. Many senior care facilities are established by religious organizations. Physicians, nurses and staff in these facilities should not be forced to participate in training programs that violate their closely-held beliefs nor should facilities be forced to comply with ordinances in direct opposition to their faith-based mission.