



Legislation Text

File #: RES. 2020-R072, **Version:** 1

To express support for stronger protections and inclusive policies at local shelters for the care and protection of LGBTQ+ people experiencing homelessness in compliance with the Virginia Values Act.

WHEREAS, LGBTQ+ people, especially transgender people, are disproportionately impacted by homelessness; and,

WHEREAS, the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, the largest survey of transgender people, found that 30 percent of transgender people have experienced homelessness in their lifetime; and

WHEREAS, more specifically, Black transgender women face extreme risk of violence and death if unsheltered; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Human Rights Campaign documented 27 murders of transgender people in the United States, most of whom were Black transgender women, and in 2020, an additional 25 murders of transgender people in the United States were documented; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief of the City, the foregoing numbers underrepresent the violence faced by transgender people in the United States; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the high risk of violence, the current political and economic climate continues to put transgender Americans at high risk of discrimination when attempting to access shelter; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development recently announced their plan to dismantle protections for transgender people seeking shelter; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief of the City, LGBTQ+ youth is another group affected by a lack of inclusive policies and, according to the Williams Institute, LGBTQ+ youth make up nine percent of the youth population in the United States, yet 40 percent of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Chapter 1140 of the Acts of Assembly of 2020, known as the Virginia Values Act (hereinafter referred to as the “Act”), the General Assembly of Virginia enacted statewide nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ people with regard to public accommodations, credit, employment, and housing; and

WHEREAS, despite the federal administration’s attempts to limit and deny shelter to LGBTQ+ Americans, homeless services in Virginia must comply with this new state law; and

WHEREAS, the City of Richmond believes that it is in the best interests of the residents of the city of Richmond that the City of Richmond protect and support the LGBTQ+ community; and

WHEREAS, it is the City’s understanding that local LGBTQ+ organizations believe that standards of care are necessary to ensure safe shelter access for LGBTQ+ people; and

WHEREAS, shelters in the city of Richmond, including both congregate and non-congregate shelters that are classified as places of public accommodation pursuant to the Act, must comply with the Act; and

WHEREAS, the Council believes that it is in the best interests of the residents of the city of Richmond that the Council express support for stronger protections and inclusive policies at local shelters, including both congregate and non-congregate shelters that are classified as places of public accommodation pursuant to the Act, for the care and protection of LGBTQ+ people experiencing homelessness in compliance with the Act;

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND:

That the Council expresses support for stronger protections and inclusive policies at local shelters, including both congregate and non-congregate shelters that are classified as places of public accommodation pursuant to the Act, for the care and protection of LGBTQ+ people, including implementation by such shelters of the following standards to further compliance with the Act:

1. A commitment to ensure that the persons entitled to protection under the Act are not discriminated against on the basis of any such person’s gender identity or sexual orientation and that any and all policies that are

prohibited by the Act are revised or otherwise eliminated, to the extent permitted by law, to comply with the Act.

2. Affirmation of the gender identity of transgender clients, including using their chosen name and pronoun consistently.
3. A commitment to work with individual transgender clients to ensure that shelter placement is client-driven and honors the unique safety needs of that individual;
4. Development and maintenance of an organizational non-discrimination policy that addresses sexual orientation and gender identity issues and encompasses protocols and procedures for shelter staff and clients.
5. Development and maintenance of a standardized data collection system that includes information regarding sexual orientation and gender identity for use by all homeless services providers.
6. A requirement that all shelter staff, particularly front-line staff, complete regular training on how shelter staff may affirm transgender clients and treat them with dignity and respect.
7. A requirement that all shelter staff complete regular conflict resolution training, with an emphasis on how to intervene if shelter residents are engaging in harassment or other forms of violence toward transgender residents.
8. A commitment to provide clients with information about LGBTQ+ affirming resources, including those identified on the Transgender Resource and Referral list maintained by the Virginia Department of Health.