



CITY OF BALTIMORE  
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

<b>TO</b>	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
<b>FROM</b>	Mary Beth Haller, Interim Commissioner of Health, Baltimore City Health Department
<b>CC</b>	Mayor's Office of Government Relations
<b>DATE</b>	May 29, 2025
<b>SUBJECT</b>	25-0021R - Informational Hearing – Well-being of Lesbian Women in Baltimore

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**Position: Favorable**

## **BILL SYNOPSIS**

This resolution calls for an informational hearing to be held to discuss the well-being of lesbian women in Baltimore City.

## **SUMMARY OF POSITION**

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) strives to protect health, eliminate disparities, and enhance the wellbeing of everyone in our community through education, coordination, advocacy, and direct service delivery. This includes Baltimore City's LGBTQ community, including lesbian women. BCHD's myriad programs and services are open to all, regardless of sexual orientation.

Queer women (both lesbian and bisexual) are more likely to experience certain negative health outcomes than heterosexual women and queer men. This is due in large part to stigma, which can cause chronic stress that can lead to unhealthy coping behaviors (e.g., smoking) and discourage queer women from seeking health care.<sup>i</sup>

Some examples of health outcomes and risk factors that disproportionately affect queer women include being more likely to experience intimate partner violence, being more likely to smoke, and being more likely to experience type II diabetes.<sup>ii,iii</sup> According to the CDC's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS), lesbian and bisexual woman are more likely than heterosexual women to experience intimate partner and/or sexual violence at some point throughout their lifetimes. This disparity exists for both physical and psychological violence, including contact sexual violence, rape, expressive aggression (verbal abuse), coercive control, and physical violence that is non-sexual in nature.<sup>ii</sup>

BCHD operates programs and initiatives aimed at diabetes prevention, smoking cessation, and teaching youth the knowledge and skills necessary to make healthy decisions in their relationships. Additionally, the agency strives to provide a welcoming and stigma-free environment in our clinics. As an agency, we envision an equitable, just, and well Baltimore where everyone has the opportunity to be healthy and to thrive. As such, we respectfully request a **favorable** report in support of the Council holding an informational hearing to discuss the wellbeing of lesbian women in Baltimore City.

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<sup>i</sup> Corliss HL, VanKim NA, Jun HJ, Austin SB, Hong B, Wang M, & Hu FB. (2018). Risk of Type 2 Diabetes Among Lesbian, Bisexual, and Heterosexual Women: Findings From the Nurses' Health Study II. *Diabetes Care*. 41(7):1448-1454. doi: 10.2337/dc17-2656.

<sup>ii</sup> US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey 2016/2017 Report on Intimate Partner Violence. Retrieved from [https://www.cdc.gov/nisvs/documentation/NISVSReportonIPV\\_2022.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nisvs/documentation/NISVSReportonIPV_2022.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> Ganz, O., Schulz, J., Ehlke, S., King Jensen, J., & Villanti, A. (2024). Cigarette smoking behaviors and nicotine dependence at the intersection of sexual identity and sex in the United States: Findings from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. *Preventive Medicine Reports*. 38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2024.102593>.