In its 11th year, the Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) is the national LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning/queer) benchmarking tool established by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) that evaluates healthcare facilities’ policies and practices related to the equity and inclusion of their LGBTQ patients, visitors, and employees. The survey requires facilities to demonstrate tangible evidence of their commitment to inclusivity, in terms of non-discrimination and staff training, patient services and support, employee benefits and policies, and community engagement. A record 626 healthcare facilities in the United States participated in the HEI 2018 survey, with HRC Foundation proactively researching key policies at more than 900 additional non-participating hospitals. The Chillicothe VA Medical Center is one of 418 facilities who participated nationally to earn a “LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Leader” designation. This represents an improvement from our facility’s designation as a “Top Performer” in 2017. The Chillicothe VA is making strides to provide inclusive policies and practices and to promote a welcoming environment for LGBTQ patients, visitors, and staff. With more room for progress, this designation is a sign that we’re moving in the right direction.

Please go to http://www.hrc.org/hei for more information about the HEI. Questions about how individuals in the Chillicothe VAMC community can get involved in efforts to promote LGBTQ-inclusivity can be directed to Dr. Beth Gensner (LGBT Veteran Care Coordinator), ext.6314, Beth.Gensner@va.gov.
State Profiles

We have seen tremendous progress toward LGBTQ equality over the past decade, yet LGBTQ Americans still lack federal civil rights protections. Without these protections, we are left with a patchwork of state and municipal laws that leave many LGBTQ people vulnerable to discrimination in their workplaces, healthcare facilities, schools and communities.

The following pages profile two states, Pennsylvania and Ohio, that lack LGBTQ protections yet have an abundance of healthcare institutions that have stepped up to ensure that the LGBTQ people in their states have inclusive and welcoming care when they need it.

This is why the HRC Foundation produces programs like the HEI that promote LGBTQ-inclusive policies and practices in the institutions that impact people’s everyday lives. This work is most important in states and communities that lack non-discrimination protections for their LGBTQ citizens and those that have passed anti-LGBTQ legislation that seeks to take away rights and legislate discrimination. Unfortunately, this is happening much too often and much of our progress is under siege. In state legislatures across the country, anti-equality politicians have been emboldened by a political climate where hate and discrimination have entered the mainstream and they are working to tear down years of progress on LGBTQ rights and inclusion.

Fortunately, many healthcare facilities and other institutions are stepping up to provide protections for their LGBTQ patients, visitors, and employees. It is particularly encouraging to see many healthcare facilities going well beyond the foundational policies promoted by the HEI and embracing a full range of inclusive policies and practices. The following pages profile two states that lack LGBTQ protections yet have an abundance of healthcare institutions that have stepped up to ensure that the LGBTQ people in their states have inclusive and welcoming care when they need it.
Ohio

LIKE PENNSYLVANIA, OHIO IS ONE OF TWENTY-SEVEN STATES IN the U.S. that ranked in the lowest-rated category, “High Priority to Achieve Basic Equality,” in HRC’s 2017 annual State Equality Index. In addition to lacking statewide non-discrimination and hate crime laws that include sexual orientation and gender identity, the Buckeye state undermines LGBTQ equality by having laws on the books that criminalize people living with HIV.

Fortunately, LGBTQ Ohioans have several hospitals and other healthcare facilities throughout the state that have embraced LGBTQ inclusion. With 27 facilities participating in the HEI, Ohio ranks 5th overall among states in the number of HEI participants and is tied for 3rd among states in the number of LGBTQ Healthcare Leaders, with 24 facilities. Many of these facilities are going well beyond the basics of non-discrimination policies and are on the cutting edge of LGBTQ policies and practices.

On the next page we profile the great work being done by The MetroHealth System, particularly at their PRIDE Network. They are joined in the Cleveland area by the Cleveland Clinic Health System which has 8 Ohio hospitals that participate in the HEI and are all LGBTQ Health Care Equality Leaders. Both MetroHealth and the Cleveland Clinic have implemented a Pronoun Project to allow staff and patients to share their pronouns.

Ohio has three multidisciplinary gender clinics for transgender and gender-expansive youth: in addition to the clinic at MetroHealth, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center and Nationwide Children’s Hospital in Columbus also have youth gender clinics. These clinics are providing vital and lifesaving care by meeting the varied medical and mental health needs of transgender youth.

In addition to providing LGBTQ-inclusive care in their clinics, the Columbus Public Health Department created the LGBTQ Health Initiative to address gaps in care and issues of health inequity within LGBTQ communities. Columbus is also home to Leaders, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center and the James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute.

Equitas Health, a Q4HC look-alike based in Columbus, is one of the nation’s largest HIV/AIDS, LGBTQ healthcare organizations serving more than 67,000 individuals in three states. New to the HEI this year is Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio Region, also providing excellent LGBTQ outpatient care in the region.

Since 2013, more than 100 Veterans’ Health Administration sites have participated in the HEI and we are excited that all five VA Medical Centers in Ohio not only participate, but are Leaders. These facilities are the VA Medical Centers located in Chillicothe, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus and Dayton.

Rounding out the state, are The University of Toledo Medical Center and the Summa Health Akron and Barberton Campuses.