

## Kennedy has malignant tumor

Massachusetts senator has been staunch ally of LGBT community

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BOSTON — Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, a longtime advocate for LGBT causes, was released from the hospital Wednesday, May 21 after being diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor.

The 76-year-old Kennedy had been hospitalized in Boston since Saturday, May 17, when he was airlifted from Cape Cod after a seizure at his home.

Kennedy was diagnosed with a malignant glioma, an especially lethal type of brain tumor. Most such patients die within three years, sooner if they are older.

Kennedy, a Democrat who's represented Massachusetts in the U.S. Senate since 1962, was an original sponsor of hate crimes legislation that included sexual orientation in 1997, according to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Since then, Kennedy has fought tirelessly for successful votes on the legislation, including passage of a version this year that includes both sexual orientation and gender identity.

Kennedy voted against the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996 and led opposition to a federal constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage 10 years later. He also opposed an anti-gay marriage measure in his home state of Massachusetts, one of two where same-sex marriage is legal.

Kennedy has fought to end funding of abstinence-only education programs, according to the Task Force. He's also the Senate lead on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, and has been an outspoken supporter for the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and increased funding for HIV/AIDS.

**"We are deeply saddened and shocked by the news of Sen. Kennedy's diagnosis. The senator is a hero to people across the country and around the world," said Rea Carey, acting executive director of the Task Force, said in a statement. "Sen. Kennedy has been a courageous advocate on behalf of so many and will no doubt bring this same fighting spirit to this latest challenge."**

On Thursday, May 22, the Associated Press listed openly gay U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., as one of Kennedy's possible successors. There currently are no openly gay members of the Senate.

Kennedy isn't up for re-election until 2012, but his diagnosis has fueled speculation that he might resign before then or not seek another term. He may also try to handpick a successor.