

LGBT Mayoral Committee Issues

LGBT City of Chicago Employee Benefits

The City of Chicago currently extends health care benefits to “eligible domestic partners.” Eligible domestic partners must be enrolled through City’s Department of Human Resources (DHR). Benefits include medical, dental and vision plans offered by the City. In addition to the Domestic Partnership Ordinance that covers health care policies, the City also approved an ordinance extending bereavement leave to domestic partners. Finally, life insurance policies offered to city employees are also extended to “domestic partners.”

The City of Chicago has also revised its Personnel Rules to further include LGBT employees. These revisions included replacing the term “sexual preference” with sexual orientation and added the term “gender identity.” The Rules were also revised to expand the definition of “immediate family member” to include a domestic partner’s mother, father, son or daughter, provided the domestic partner is registered with the DHR. This change is particularly relevant to the section covering family illnesses

The City’s sister agencies (the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Park District, the Chicago Transit Authority and the City Colleges of Chicago) have all either adopted rules to match the benefits the City provides or is in the process of doing so.

Unfortunately, the current gaps in the City’s pension fund benefits require changes in Illinois State law (and pension policies) before they can be amended to include domestic partnerships (or civil unions). Consequently, the City of Chicago is limited in some of the employee benefits that can be offered.

Education

- 89% of LGBT students in Illinois report being verbally harassed in school, 43% of Illinois students reported being physically harassed and 21% reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation. 60% of those students who were harassed never told a staff member
- Twelve districts in the country (including Los Angeles, Minneapolis/St. Paul and all of Massachusetts) have an in-house position within the district(s) that works to ensure Anti-discrimination Policies are implemented and followed, as well as working to coordinate and create training programs within the district(s)
- Illinois Safe Schools Alliance reports receiving approximately one phone call a day from gender-variant and transgender students who are looking for help and resources to address harassment/bullying/administration or educator issues within their school
- School staff also contributes to harassment. A third of students heard school staff make homophobic remarks (32%), sexist remarks (39%) and negative comments about someone’s gender expression (39%) sometimes, often or frequently in the past year

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- The presence of supportive staff contributed to a range of positive indicators including fewer reports of missing school, fewer reports of feeling unsafe, greater academic achievement, higher educational aspirations and a greater sense of school belonging
- Nearly nine out of 10 transgender students experienced verbal harassment at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation and gender expression, more than half experienced physical harassment because of their sexual orientation and gender expression and more than a quarter experienced physical assault because of their sexual orientation and gender expression
- 28% of LGBTQ students in Illinois have reported hearing staff make disparaging remarks about someone's gender expression, and 22% *regularly* heard disparaging remarks about the LGBTQ community from educators
- Most transgender students had talked with a teacher (66%) or a school-based mental health professional (51%) at least once in the past year about LGBTQ-related issues. *Transgender students were also more likely than non-transgender (lesbian, gay and bisexual) students to talk with school staff about these issues*
- Nearly two-thirds (61.1%) of students reported that they felt unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation, and more than a third (39.9%) felt unsafe because of their gender expression
- 29.1% of LGBTQ students missed a class at least once and 30.0% missed at least one day of school in the past month because of safety concerns, compared to only 8.0% and 6.7%, respectively, of a national sample of secondary school students
- Having a Gay-Straight Alliance in school was related to more positive experiences for LGBT students, including: hearing fewer homophobic remarks, less victimization because of sexual orientation and gender expression, less absenteeism because of safety concerns and a greater sense of belonging to the school community
- Students attending schools with an anti-bullying policy that included protections based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression heard fewer homophobic remarks, experienced lower levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation, were more likely to report that staff intervened when hearing homophobic remarks and were more likely to report incidents of harassment and assault to school staff than students at schools with a general policy or no policy

Aging

Introduction

LGBT seniors must simultaneously navigate the challenges of being a senior and identifying as LGBT. Like all seniors, LGBT seniors face poverty, isolation and lack of access to healthcare

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and housing. Discrimination against LGBT individuals exacerbates these challenges: societal discrimination limits the number of services that LGBT seniors can access, and legal discrimination that denies LGBT seniors rights basic rights. As the intersection of two minority identities, the challenges experienced by LGBT seniors are often misunderstood even among those who provide services to either seniors or the LGBT community. Discrimination and lack of competency negatively impact LGBT seniors' quality of life.

Issues Faced by Seniors

Like older people in general, LGBT seniors want comfortable, safe and friendly retirement housing, in-home support to allow persons to age in place as long as possible, advocacy with social service and health care professionals, access to preventative health care services, and a senior center for social and intellectual stimulation and crucial informational resources.

Issues Unique to LGBT Seniors

Lack of education among professionals in the healthcare field and especially among those delivering social services to seniors poses barriers to LGBT seniors in need of appropriate care. Unconscious or implied bias limits open communication between providers and LGBT clients/patients regarding lifestyle and health issues.

Legal discrimination imposes higher financial burdens and risks on LGBT people who must piece together legal protections that do not match the power and scope of protection offered by the benefits of marriage laws. These benefits are seemingly innumerable, and include healthcare benefits and protection of the family home when a partner enters assisted living. Lack of marriage recognition precludes LGBT seniors from receiving benefits tied to Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, and Spousal Impoverishment Act coverage.

Recommendations

The next mayor must create an assessment of the city's capacity to provide culturally-competent and welcoming programming for LGBT seniors. Subsequently, cooperation with and assistance to LGBT service providers who assist seniors will ensure that the unique needs of LGBT seniors are being met. Furthermore, the mayor will need to formally recognize LGBT seniors as a vulnerable population with unique and specific needs and to designate LGBT seniors as a target population under the criteria of the Area Plan for the Chicago Department on Senior Services.

Immigration

Mayor Richard M. Daley has been a strong supporter of the rights of LGBT people and immigrants. Until Congress approves an immigration reform that protects the rights of all immigrants and fixes the current immigration system, our next mayor will need to take on a leadership role to advocate and protect the rights of immigrants and detainees, including LGBT immigrants.

Issues facing LGBT immigrants and their families:

I. LGBT immigrant detainees.

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- A. The City of Chicago should not take on the role of immigration law enforcement. The City should opt out of programs that divert resources to persecute immigrants and from programs that increase mistrust of authorities among the city's most vulnerable populations, including immigrants and LGBT. In such instances, the City of Chicago should protect and prioritize every individuals' right to privacy, public safety, and public health.
 - B. The City of Chicago should protect LGBT immigrant detainees from numerous human rights violations resulting from their detention in isolated and unaccountable immigration detention facilities.
 - C. The City of Chicago should ensure access to counseling and adequate medical treatment for LGBT and HIV positive immigrant detainees.
- II. Refugees seeking protection in the United States due to persecution based on sexual orientation, gender identity or HIV status.
- A. The mayor should advocate to end the current one-year deadline for asylum seekers, which puts too many people at jeopardy of being repatriated to countries that persecute them—in some cases because they are LGBT people.
 - B. The City of Chicago should advocate for an end current administrative bias that impacts the adjudication of asylum claims by LGBT refugees.
- III. Same-sex binational couples and their families
- A. The Mayor should advocate to protect and maintain all American families together, including bi-national same-sex families. To this end, the Mayor must advocate for Congress to pass a bill allowing same-sex bi-national couples to be recognized for immigration purposes.
- IV. Undocumented students
- A. The Mayor should advocate to provide a path to citizenship for immigrant youth brought to the United States as minors. LGBT youth have demonstrated strong leadership in voicing the needs of this group and LGBT organizations call on the Mayor to support this important cause.

Reference Material:

Policy Advocacy Materials-

- National Immigrant Justice Center, "Isolated in detention," <http://www.immigrantjustice.org/press/detention/isolatedindetention.html> (released September 14, 2010)
- National Immigrant Justice Center, "The one-year deadline and BIA: No protection, no process," <http://www.immigrantjustice.org/policy-resources/oneyeardeadlinereport/oneyeardeadline.html> (released October 21, 2010)
- Lambda Legal, "Immigration Reform Statement"
- Latino Equality Alliance, "Why Latino Leaders Should Support inclusion of UAFA in CIR"
- Sylvia Rivera Law Project, "Disproportionate Deportation of Trans People"

Op/ Eds & Newspaper Articles-

- Chicago RedEye, "For some gay immigrants, going home is not an option," <http://www.chicagonow.com/blogs/redeye/2010/05/by-georgia-garvey-redeyehohn-ademola.html>
- Politico, "Immigration hard-liners to lead Judiciary?" <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1010/44144.html>
- Politico, "Democrats pivot on immigration" <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0910/42153.html>

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- New York Times, "Students spared amid an increase on deportations."
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/09/us/09students.html?th&emc=th>
- Lambda Legal, "Arizona Hurts Us All"
- Los Angeles Magazine, "Death on Terminal Island"

Studies/Polls-

- Williams Institute Report, "Binational Report"
- Harris Interactive Poll, "LGBT Americans Oppose Arizona Policies"

Regulations Comments-

- Comments submitted by various groups about No-Match Letters (Trans Connection)

The LGBT Coalition for Immigrant Rights advocates for legislative reform that benefits everyone, including LGBT individuals. The coalition educates policymakers and the general public regarding the importance of reforming the immigration system, to create an immigration system that promotes economic opportunity, is comprehensive and inclusive, and that advances the principles described above.

Youth Homelessness

Introduction

Youth homelessness is an alarmingly common reality for LGBT youth. Too often, LGBT youth are rejected by their families and ostracized from their communities after they come out, victimized by rampant prejudice and abuse. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force estimates that anywhere between 20% and 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ compared to between 4% and 10% of all youth nationally. Unsurprisingly, the adverse effects of bias against LGBT youth directly result in many social ills. Youth rejected by their families were 8.4 times more likely to attempt suicide, and some 58% of LGBT homeless youth reported being victims of sexual assault. In order to provide our youth with an opportunity to overcome the daunting challenges of family rejection and homelessness, we have a dual obligation to provide high-quality, competent services for homeless youth and also to eliminate bias in our homes and communities. Our next mayor must take the national lead in addressing the epidemic of youth homelessness.

- *Homeless Youth in Chicago*

Homeless youth—regardless of whether or not they identify as LGBT—need beds, and Chicago simply isn't meeting this need. Center on Halsted and other Chicago area human services agencies that assist homeless youth estimate that on an average night, only 180 beds are available for the city's entire homeless population, about 2,000 of whom are youth.

Homeless LGBT Youth in Chicago

Chicago is no exception to the pandemic of LGBT homeless youth. A study conducted by The Night Ministry, the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless and the Survey Research Laboratory at UIC estimate that between 2,000 and 3,000 of homeless youth each year identify as LGBT. In addition to the challenges of homelessness, LGBT youth will likely struggle with service providers ill-equipped to assist them. Many (though certainly not all) faith-based organizations discriminate against LGBT youth, arguing that service of LGBT youth contradicts their religious

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missions. Other organizations, through lack of education and training, may not have the resources and knowledge necessary to adequately serve LGBT youth.

Policy Recommendations

The next mayor must be a staunch advocate for a national survey on youth homelessness—a survey that gathers information on the sexual orientation and gender identity of homeless youth. Additionally, any mayoral candidate must advocate for sensitivity training, both for relevant city departments and also for organizations that receive city funds to serve homeless youth. The mayor’s office must redouble the city’s efforts to assist homeless youth. Youth need more short- and long-term housing options to meet immediate needs and to prepare youth for a healthy adulthood.

Transgender Rights

Introduction

Persistently, transgender people are subject to unimaginable abuse. According to the Gay and Lesbian Straight Education Network, as many as 55% of transgender youth report being physically attacked; another study conducted by the Gender Public Advocacy Coalition on transgender people concluded that as many as 48% of transgender people are victims of physical or sexual assault. All too often, transgender people must endure the bias of others who simply do not understand the challenges inherent in being transgender. Our next mayor must work with the transgender community to eliminate transphobia and to empower transgender individuals with knowledge about legal protections and community resources available to them.

National Concerns for Transgender People

The myriad challenges faced by transgender people range, from legal discrimination to basic concerns in daily living that would otherwise be mundane. Transgender people are eight-times more likely to be denied employment nationally, and even in places like Chicago and Illinois where legal protections for transgender people are relatively strong, discrimination against transgender people has become a distressingly common occurrence. In addition to bias in the workplace, trans people struggle with public accommodations discrimination—for instance, lack of gender-neutral bathrooms. Trans issues are often misunderstood and underdiscussed within the LGBT community; there is a well-known saying that the “T” in “LGBT” is silent. Furthermore, competency around trans issues nationwide—in both public and private settings—is extremely low.

Concerns of the Chicago Transgender Community

Law enforcement agencies in Chicago have an extremely negative reputation in the transgender community. In part because of repeated instances of abuse of transgender individuals in custody at the hands of law enforcement officials, transgender people are significantly less likely to trust the police, and often to report crime. Additionally, social service agencies that work with trans clients will state—based on anecdotal evidence and hard data—that transgender people are often most vulnerable to become sex workers.

Policy Recommendations

The next mayor must take a strong stand in support of fully-inclusive ENDA. In addition, however, our next mayor will also have to acknowledge and work to remedy where city and

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state protections have fallen short of their aim to end discrimination against transgender people locally. Because diversity is crucial to ensuring that the city strives to understand the perspectives of all Chicagoans, the next mayor should commit to hiring more transgender people in city government. Additionally, the mayor should require city agencies and agencies receiving city funding to assess and improve their transgender competency, and to provide resources to agencies that educate the public about the issues facing transgender people.

Transgender Employment

Transgender people face discrimination, harassment and anti-transgender violence in many areas of their lives. These conditions create significant barriers to employment and lead to devastating economic insecurity.

Many homeless transgender youth are under the age of 18 and, in many areas, can neither get a job due to lack of photo identification

Transgender people experience unemployment at twice the rate of the population as a whole.

47% of transgender people have experienced an adverse job outcome, such as being fired, not hired or denied a promotion.

15% of transgender people live on \$10,000 per year or less—double the rate of the general population.

Basic employment protections for transgender people provide a crucial foundation for dignified, economically secure lives. Employment should be based on one's skills and ability to perform a job. No one deserves to be unemployed or fired because of their gender identity or expression.

Transgender Homelessness

One in five transgender individuals need or are at risk of needing homeless shelter assistance.

It is estimated that there are around 5,000-8,000 homeless LGBT youth in Chicago alone.

The majority of existing shelters and other care systems are not providing safe and effective services to transgendered people. Most shelters are segregated by birth sex, regardless of the individual's gender identity, and homeless transgender youth are even ostracized by some agencies that serve their LGB peers.

Accurate and up-to-date documentation is usually a prerequisite for access to education, jobs, safe spaces and services. Lack of documentation places yet another hurdle in the way of a transgender young person who is trying to stay safe and healthy.

Transgender people need access to simple, non-trans-specific (not related to sex reassignment) health care. In attempting to acquire this care, whether for a cold, flu, heart condition or broken leg, many transgender individuals experience maltreatment from medical providers who are judgmental, unsympathetic and poorly informed about gender identity.

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Transgender Interaction with Police

There has been widespread profiling of transgender women as sex workers, inappropriate and selective targeting of transgender and gender variant individuals to produce identification and “prove” their gender identity.

Reports indicate that transgender people are at risk of sexual violence while in detention and may be subjected to sexual harassment, sexual assault and in some instances rape.

Transgendered people often do not report crimes against them, in particular hate crimes and domestic violence, because they are reluctant to reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity to responding officers, and because they fear homophobic or transphobic treatment at the hands of police officers.

Mayoral Appointments

Goal

To encourage the next Mayor of Chicago to make significant (in role and number) appointments in his or her administration from among the pool of qualified LGBT leaders. Placing open members of the LGBR community in prominent roles on the Mayor’s staff and in his or her administration will have many benefits, including policy direction and visibility.

Approach

The Mayoral Appointments Project will identify, recruit, and vet qualified people from the LGBT community in Chicago for prospective mayoral appointments and will provide a briefing book of potential appointments to the next mayor’s administration.

Next Steps

- **Identify** high-level LGBT folks already in the administration or campaign structure, and determine if they would be willing to leverage resources and open doors for future LGBT leaders?
- **Publicize** the Appointments Project through a variety of media to recruit potential appointees. **Spread the word** as widely as possible.
- **Secure an explicit commitment** from the candidates or the administration to appoint LGBT people to the administration – from junior to senior level appointments for people who are expertly qualified for their positions (e.g., not hiring LGBT people just to hire LGBT people, but because the professionals are right for the job)
- **Organize a committee to receive and vet applications** –LGBT candidates will be weighed (1) for their merit for the job, (2) commitment to the administration and (3) commitment to equality for LGBT people – not necessarily by their politics/beliefs on the path to LGBT equality.
- **Prepare briefing book** of potential appointees and interested members of the LGBT community

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HIV/AIDS

While everyone in Chicago is at risk of HIV, gay men and men who have sex with men (MSM) of all races and transgendered individuals are the population most impacted by HIV disease in Chicago. The next mayor must build on Mayor Richard M. Daley's substantial legacy of compassionate HIV policy to further improve the lives of people with HIV regardless of sexual orientation and advance the health of gay men and MSM and trans individuals. HIV is draining our community of some of our most talented, creative, and compassionate gay, bisexual and transgender (GBT) men. Instead of devoting their energies to building Chicago into a stronger community, too many of our gay neighbors are struggling to maintain their health in the face of a crumbling public health infrastructure.

Specific policy recommendations include:

Address the disproportionate impact of HIV among gay men and MSM who are African-American and Latino and among GBT youth of all races. Research indicates that African American gay men and MSM are seven times more likely to be living with HIV than their white peers, and Latinos are three times more likely to be HIV-positive. The next mayor should invest in the future of communities of color by:

- *Ensuring that HIV prevention programs are evidence-based and targeted to the communities and populations most impacted by HIV, including on the West and South Sides.* Chicago must promote strong indigenous, community-based organizations while recognizing that agencies must join forces to remain viable.
- *Promoting creative approaches to HIV prevention education and outreach, such as a social media campaign promoting the acceptance of gay black men and Latinos and people with HIV.* The exemplary Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus should be continued and provided with additional funding. A wide-spread, coordinated campaign to distribute and promote the use of male and female condoms, modeled after similar efforts in New York and Washington, D.C., should be implemented.

Promote a strong public health department. The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) is charged with leading HIV prevention efforts in Chicago and funds and coordinates federally-funded programs for people living with HIV in Chicago and the metro area. Public health leadership leverages greater cooperation from government and community stakeholders to research, plan, deploy, and evaluate an array of science-based activities to fight the epidemic. The CDPH has been a national leader in HIV prevention and care. Plagued by low staff morale, expanded furlough days (even for positions that are fully federally-funded), and cuts to funding and personnel, this prominent role is fast slipping amid a political climate that does not value front-line public health efforts. The next mayor must foster public health excellence, creativity, and nimbleness in the face of changing epidemics. Federally-funded staff positions in CDPH should be filled quickly so remaining staff are not forced to perform multiple

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jobs, worsening burn-out and the brain drain. People living with HIV must continue to be in prominent leadership positions in CDPH.

Follow a holistic, strengths-based model of gay men's health promotion. Fear-based, scolding HIV prevention education efforts are ineffective in the third decade of the epidemic. Instead, the next mayor of Chicago must invest in comprehensive, holistic health promotion activities that recognize gay men as people, not vectors of disease transmission. Such efforts should promote physical and mental health, spiritual well-being, and forming strong, caring communities. The "How are you healthy?" campaign, supported by CDPH and executed by the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Center on Halsted, Howard Brown Health Center and Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN) is an example of such an approach.

Partner with other levels of government and the non-profit and private sector to implement the National HIV/AIDS Strategy. The Strategy, released by President Obama in July 2010, sets ambitious goals for preventing HIV, improving care for people with HIV, and reducing health disparities. The next Mayor must commit to partnering with the federal government and county and state agencies to implement the Strategy.

Police / Public Safety

The police do not currently have an anti-bullying program with the public schools. This is a crucial issue facing the youngest and most vulnerable in our community.

Only the 23rd District has an LGBT Liaison. This role is valuable to cultivating a good local relationship between the community and the police. There has been discussion in the past about creating liaisons in every district or a city-wide team to fulfill this important role.

Efforts in recent years to recruit LGBT applicants to the police academy have been moderately successful. The department should continue to implement this strategy to build a police force that mirrors the city it serves.

The Department is now actively recruiting former members of the military. While this may produce good candidates it inherently discriminates against the LGBT community who must serve under the current 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' policy.

The Department should provide comprehensive training on LGBT issues to all CPD officers at regular periodic intervals. These should cover searches of transgender individuals, LGBT domestic violence and "hate crimes" (crimes motivated by discrimination), and sexual assaults of LGBT individuals.

The Department needs to be more pro-active in hate crime education and prevention. Many crimes go unreported because the victims do not feel safe reaching out to police.

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The Department should also institute specific policies and procedures regarding police interaction with, strip searches and detention of transgender individuals.