

Creating and Establishing an LGBTQ+ Commission in Los Angeles County

In light of the ever-increasing bias, prejudice, and hate against those who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+), it is clear that Los Angeles County (County) not only needs to stand with our LGBTQ+ residents, but also ensure that County policies are inclusive of the specific needs of this community.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) create policies and oversees over 30 County Departments that provides services and resources that impact over ten million residents in LA County. There are also 34 different commissions in the County that also make recommendations to the Board about how the County can better represent, support, and uplift vulnerable communities.

Aside from the bias, prejudice, and hate experienced by the LGBTQ+ community, just living in this truth means harm and even death. According to the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations' 2021 Hate Crime Report, 89% of the hate crimes towards gay men were of a violent nature and 93% of anti-transgender crimes

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were violent – a rate of violence higher than any other marginalized group recorded by the report.

Across the nation, we are seeing governance on all levels institute hateful policies against the LGBTQ+ community that perpetuates stereotypes, myths, and falsities that puts a target on the backs of those who have just as much right as anyone else to pursue “life, liberty, and happiness.” In the first five months of this year alone, nearly 500 anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been introduced, according to the American Civil Liberties Union. These bills range from censoring school curriculum on LGBTQ+ topics, criminalizing gender-affirming care for youth, targeting drag shows, promoting discrimination and many others.

Research have found, year after year, that attempted suicide rates, suicidal ideations, and suicide among the LGBTQ+ youth are significantly higher than among the general population. Laws and policies that discriminate against this community can have tremendous negative impacts on the physical and mental health and overall well-being of LGBTQ+ youth. Some of these youth may be more susceptible to depression and substance dependencies due to legislation that are homophobic and transphobic. We have also seen the opposite as well. When there are more inclusive legislation and policies that are welcoming and recognize the impact and contributions of this community, there are significant positive impacts on someone’s overall health.

Inclusivity is more than just policies, but it’s a matter of public health to live and thrive as who they are. LA County is home to over half a million LGBTQ+ residents and are represented in all races, ethnicities, gender, religion...and it is incumbent on the

Board to ensure that the positions and policies it takes is inclusive of all and one way of doing so is through the creation of the County's LGBTQ+ Commission.

This Commission, the first in the County, will review current and make recommendations to the Board on future policies that are put forward by the County Departments and commissions to ensure we are promoting inclusivity and we are making a conscious effort that unintended consequences of such do not cause harm against residents the Board is trying to represent.

Having an entity made up of individuals who know and have experienced the unique struggles that are common to the LGBTQ+ community is vital. This commission will allow the County to see this community through its own lens and understand the many overlapping challenges they often experience. Some of these issues include but are not limited to homelessness, substance abuse, mental health, access to health care, discrimination, and lack of services.

Additionally, it is just as important that employees of the County of Los Angeles are understanding and sensitive to the needs of their colleagues and the residents who they advocate and provide for, starting with using inclusive language that is mindful of identification, expression, orientation, and representation. Much of how we learn and become conscious of differences and similarities is through training our County staff and contractors so that we can be better to each other and the residents of LA County.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Create an LGBTQ+ Commission, in 180 days, supported by the Executive Office of the Board, that will serve in an advisory capacity to the Board, County

Departments, and County Commissions. The Commission will:

- a. Have 15 members, including two nominated by each Supervisor (10) and the remaining five to serve as “at-large” community representatives, with final appointment by the Board.
2. Adopt the following duties and scope of work for the LGBTQ+ Commission to:
- a. Review existing, make recommendations about, and propose new:
 - i. policies;
 - ii. budgets;
 - iii. budgetary processes;
 - iv. programs and trainings for County employees and contractors;
 - v. legislation; and
 - vi. practices and protocols that impact LGBTQ+ communities to the Board and County Departments.
 - b. Provide an annual report to the Board and community apprising of the LGBTQ+ activities and accomplishments during the year on the state of County services, programs, and resources impacting the LGBTQ+ communities, with attention to focusing on specific areas of reform or change, as needed.
 - c. Engage consistently with LGBTQ+ communities and key stakeholders in the LA County to carry out its duties and responsibilities, such as:
 - i. Review outcomes, the quality and accessibility of services, and type of resources provided to LGBTQ+ communities, in

collaboration with County Departments and other relevant stakeholders. This should include:

1. Visiting sites and conducting interviews with LGBTQ+ recipients of these services to the extent permitted by law;
 2. Receiving input from all stakeholders, including public, private, and community-based stakeholders regarding County administered or County-contracted services;
 3. Conveying information received to the Board of Supervisors and relevant County departments; and,
 4. Where appropriate, make associated recommendations for improvement.
3. Direct the Department of Human Resources to:
- a. Make the “Transgender Awareness: Working with Constituents and Colleagues” training part of the mandatory training for all County employees and contractors; and
 - b. Offer additional trainings for County employees to better serve the LGBTQ+ communities.
4. Direct the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors to report back to the Board during final or supplemental budget phase with a recommended funding and staffing plan for the LGBTQ+ Commission. The funding plan should include:
- a. A proposed budget for commissioner compensation, transportation, and

other costs; and

- b. LGBTQ+ Commission staffing and administrative support, including a full-time Executive Director with experience promoting, supporting, advocating, and creating programs, services, and resources for LGBTQ+ communities.
 - i. The Executive Office of the Board should immediately work with Department of Human Resources to begin recruitment for the Executive Director, but no formal offer shall be made without Board approval of the funding plan.
5. Direct County Counsel to draft the LGBTQ+ Commission ordinance and bylaws submit to the Board for approval within 90 days of the passage of the motion.

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