

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS AND LINDSEY HORVATH June 6, 2023

Care With Pride: Supporting Gender Affirming Health Care, Mental Health Services, and Care Management for LGBTQ+ Residents, Including Transgender, Gender Nonconforming, and Intersex (TGI) People

June is Pride Month, celebrating Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) residents, commemorating the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in Manhattan. Each June, people around the country work to achieve equal justice and opportunity for LGBTQ+ Americans. Unfortunately, this year’s pride month occurs during a national backdrop in which discriminatory policies targeting LGBTQ+ people are being passed around the country. Just in the first five months of 2023, over 500 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were considered in a majority of states across the country, ranging from censoring materials in schools to banning transgender student athletes from participating in sports matching their gender identity. This also includes healthcare, where doctors and families are being criminalized for supporting young people trying to access gender-affirming care.

Not only does Los Angeles County reject these policy proposals, but it is also

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committed to being a model of providing the care and resources needed to support LGBTQ+ residents, including youth. According to studies, 5.1% of County residents, representing over half a million people, identify as LGBT. As legislation elsewhere passes preventing access to medically necessary interventions for Transgender, Gender nonconforming, and Intersex (TGI) people, the County supports the rights of TGI people to access County services in a way that is affirming and welcoming of their identities. The County is committed to ensuring TGI people have safe access to necessary medical, mental health, and care coordination services throughout its departments.

This is especially important as studies show that LGBTQ+ residents are more likely to experience the social, medical, economic, and mental health consequences of discrimination, family rejection, and trauma. This results in an overrepresentation of LGBTQ+ depending on County departments for safety net services. A 2014 study noted that LGBTQ+ youth make up 19% of youth in the County's foster care system and 40% of youth experiencing homelessness.

In June of 2021, the Board of Supervisors unanimously passed the first *Care with Pride* motion, instructing the Department of Health Services (DHS) to work with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and community-based organizations to expand competent, affirming healthcare models, and to assess current protocols regarding gender-affirming care, soliciting feedback with community for steps the County should take to improve care coordination. In June of 2022, the Board of Supervisors unanimously passed the second *Care with Pride* motion, expanding on these efforts to create a Gender Health Program (GHP) within DHS, to standardize and

strengthen LGBTQ+ services for DHS-empaneled patients, and to work with DCFS and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to ensure mental health and child welfare partners were core components of this program. This program now serves as a valuable linkage point for comprehensive gender-affirming services that include medical care, mental health care, and care coordination. The current population of TGI patients served by DHS has grown to more than 800 individuals who have received more than 2,800 visits related to gender-affirming services.

The GHP is a successful partnership amongst DHS, DMH, and DCFS, each with distinct roles related to gender-affirming services (medical, surgical, mental health, and care coordination). These roles and responsibilities were solidified at a countywide Gender Health Coalition retreat in April of 2023. The retreat highlighted concrete achievements, including identification of staff at DHS, DMH, and DCFS who have responsibilities specifically related to gender-affirming care, the addition of appropriate gender-affirming medications to the DHS formulary, and updates to the “banner bar” in the DHS electronic health record to permit inclusion of a patient’s preferred pronouns. The team also identified areas for ongoing efforts, including enhanced access to data related to identification of need and delivery of services, further efforts to support coordination across departments, alignment of clinical care with the most current expected practices as outlined in the recently released World Professional Association for Transgender Health’s (WPATH) Standards of Care 8 (SOC 8), enhanced staff education in gender-affirming services, and improved information for the public regarding gender-affirming services available through the County. Additionally, within DHS, the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Antiracism (EDIA) Initiative plays a critical role

in this work, as it directly supports the advancement of TGI and gender-affirming initiatives throughout DHS.

This Pride Month, the County reaffirms its commitment to providing gender-affirming and inclusive care. County departments must continue expanding and enhancing services for TGI residents to ensure safe, affirming, and appropriate access to County medical care, mental health care and care coordination services, to stand in firm contrast and direct opposition to hateful policies being implemented elsewhere in the country.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors instruct the Department of Health Services, Department of Mental Health, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Public Health, and the Chief Executive Office Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative, in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations, to report back in 90 days on the progress of the Gender Health Program and include:

- a. Data and reporting issues;
- b. The status of clinical standards of the Gender Health Program;
- c. Feasibility of developing and offering educational webinars in gender-affirming care to DHS, DMH, DPH, and DCFS front-line workforce members;
- d. Considerations for clinical and administrative staff needed to ensure the continued success of the program as it grows to serve more residents;
- e. Develop a communications and outreach strategy, including the use of traditional and local media, social media, community-based organizations, and community partners, to raise awareness to community of the Gender Health

Program; and

- f. A plan to create a public-facing County website offering resources and referral links to gender-affirming health care services within County departments, including recommendations on the location of the website to maximize access for this target population. This should include a plan for creating and maintaining the website with an identified website owner for creation and maintenance to continue elevating this patient service.

I FURTHER MOVE that Department of Health Services report back in 30 days on the status of adding staff for its Equity Diversity Inclusion and Antiracism (EDIA) initiative, including the status of hiring onto existing items added previously to DHS' budget to focus on EDIA work as well as a description and status of EDIA budget requests submitted for consideration as part of the 2023-2024 budget cycle.

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