

A Report Back from *Transgender Health Care Access* An Alameda County Town Hall

July 25th, 7 – 9pm

Over 100 transgender community members, relatives, advocates, and allies opened a dialogue with local, county, and state officials about the need for increased access to low-cost, culturally competent health care. Taking over the auditorium of the Elihu Harris State Office Building, the Town Hall, the first of its kind in Alameda County, covered the need for increased County-wide investment in health care available to low-income, uninsured, and underinsured transgender community members and their families.

County Supervisor Keith Carson and Berkeley City Councilmembers Darryl Moore and Kriss Worthington opened the Town Hall by expressing support for an initiative to address a lack of services to meet the primary, preventative, and mental health needs of the community.

Two community members, Darel Ayap and Yavanté Thomas-Guess, shared their own stories of transition. Including Darel's sobering experience of beginning hormone therapy at a time when she didn't have health insurance. Without access to a doctor, she bought hormones brought up from Mexico and administered them on a trial and error basis.

A number of health care professionals testified about the degree to which the health care needs of the transgender community are going mostly unmet. One provider mentioned that her organization has to turn transgender clients away due to a lack of resources. Another provider talked about how competent care now leads to the prevention of serious illnesses in the future.

Finally, two community leaders, Tiffany Woods-Bodine and Patricia Kevena Fili, provided a vision for moving towards better health care county-wide. Emphasizing the need for training, Tiffany called on the county to ensure that all county health care providers (including support and administrative staff) participate in effective training opportunities. Patricia followed this request by inviting the county to invest in a collaboration developing between Berkeley Free Clinic, Tri-City Health Center, and Highland Hospital to create a transgender health care network of providers that spans most of the County.

Moderator James Green closed the evening by reminding attendees that the Town Hall was made possible through an ongoing community organizing effort and that interested community members and advocates can get involved by emailing info@transgenderlawcenter.org.

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