



2020 Joint Legislative Human Services Hearing; Thursday, January 30, 2020

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Distinguished members of the Human Services Hearing, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you all today. My name is Cynthia Dames, Project Manager of The NEW Pride Agenda.

Background:

The Empire State Pride Agenda (ESPA) was long New York State's leading LGBTQ advocacy organization and drove a host of victories, including ending discrimination based on sexual orientation and obtaining marriage equality. Notwithstanding our progress, discrimination against LGBTQ activists began discussing the need for a new organization with a more diverse scope to address the myriad challenges still faced by LGBTQ New Yorkers, especially for low-income and marginalized LGBTQ people. These challenges include access to culturally competent health and behavioral health services, education, employment, and housing. The NEW Pride Agenda is committed to effectively addressing LGBTQ concerns, protecting already enacted LGBTQ civil rights throughout New York State.

Board Diversity:

We are leaders who represent the rich demographic—racial/ethnic, age, professional background, and socio-economic status—and geographic diversity of New York State's LGBTQ community. The NEW Pride Agenda has the stated mission of working directly with the State's diverse LGBTQ population—including queer communities of color, Transgender, Gender Non-conforming, and Non-binary persons—to advance their rights, protections, and services through a statewide civic engagement and advocacy campaign.

State Focus:

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, The NEW Pride Agenda (NPA) operates on a mandate of civic engagement and educating the public, as well as advocating on behalf of New York State's diverse LGBTQ community with respect to the needs and unique challenges faced by queer New Yorkers. To this end, NPA is both excited and grateful that Governor Cuomo announced in his State of the State address that he will direct the Governor's Office of Employee Relations to provide cultural competency training regarding gender identity and expression, so that transgender, gender-nonconforming, and gender-nonbinary (TGNCNB) New Yorkers can access State services and work in environments free from discrimination, harassment, or stigma.



The NEW Pride Agenda, Inc.

www.newprideagenda.org

Budget Request: \$1.5 million for Gender Identity and Expression Trainings in Community:

While the NEW Pride Agenda agrees that—and advocated for—requiring all State employees to complete annual Transgender cultural competency trainings is a necessary first step—particularly as New York is the largest employer in the State—in protecting TGNCNB persons, we believe that the same training should be mandated for all for-profit and non-profit organizations across New York State who operate within the domains of housing, healthcare, education and employment, perhaps in a phase-in approach.

Therefore, NPA requests \$1.5 million in new funding for TGNCNB-led organizations to support their continued efforts in statewide Transgender cultural competency training and awareness. The goal of the training is to educate these particular for-profit and non-profit organizations regarding the legal rights and protections of TGNCNB New Yorkers, and making sure that their organizational environments are in compliance with the protections codified by New York State's Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA).

We are requesting that the State of New York allocate \$1.5 million in funding for six TGNCNB-led organizations across the following five regions: Long Island, Albany/Hudson Valley, Rochester/Buffalo, Western New York, and New York City (2 organizations). These trainings would serve to increase understanding and awareness regarding the lives and realities of TGNCNB New Yorkers, and also work as an effective and necessary means to implement GENDA. Indeed, businesses and organizations across the State who operate in the realms of housing, healthcare, education and employment would become aware of the distinct challenges faced by TGNCNB individuals as they come into contact with institutions within the aforementioned domains.

Need for GENDA Implementation:

- As many of you remember, the Empire State Pride Agenda tried, but was unsuccessful, in its attempt to ratify GENDA and non-discrimination legislation several years ago.
- Remarkably, New York's resilient TGNCNB led the effort, and with the legislature's support, in successfully getting GENDA passed in January, 2019.
- We, as the NEW Pride Agenda, in collaboration with the State's TGNCNB community, want to embrace, engage, and advance GENDA-related issues. As we know, any law without mandated, targeted, and funded implementation often becomes fallow.
- At the request of the Office of Governor, we recently conducted an anonymous, statewide survey of TGNCNB individuals about their experiences with discrimination in employment, education, housing and healthcare. The primary concern of those we surveyed was the ignorance of individuals who operate within the domains of housing, healthcare, employment, and education regarding the rights and protections provided by GENDA. Those surveyed also shared a sense of confusion about who or where they should report instances of discrimination to.

These facts underscore the necessity for \$1.5 million to be allocated to TGNCNB-led organizations to create trainings to implement GENDA and improve the lives of TGNCNB people in housing, healthcare, education, and employment across the State of New York. GENDA is a good start, but without effective implementation, it never will be enough. Thank you for this consideration, I am happy to answer any of your questions or concerns.

