

# GOVERNOR PATRICK CELEBRATES ADMINISTRATION'S COMMITMENT TO LGBT YOUTH

Swears in new and returning members of the MA Commission on  
LGBT Youth



*Governor Patrick swears in new and returning members of the Massachusetts Commission on LGBT Youth. (Photo Credit: Eric Haynes / Governor's Office)*

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BOSTON – Wednesday, January 9, 2013 – Governor Patrick today swore in new and returning members of the Massachusetts Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth and celebrated the progress his Administration has made in improving life for LGBT youth. Consistent with the Commission's previous policy recommendations, the Patrick-Murray administration has improved LGBT youth access to safe homes; expanded training and education programs for agency staff and providers that interact with LGBT youth; and recognized gender identity in the analysis of youth health and safety.

"I am proud to join the members of the MA Commission on LGBT Youth to celebrate the progress we have made in improving conditions for LGBT youth and to look ahead at the work that needs to be done," said Governor Patrick. "We do what we do as a matter of conscience – all young people should have a chance to thrive. In that spirit, we will continue to work with the Commission to promote healthy, safe environments for all youth, provide health education and services to meet the needs of the LGBT population and continue to affirm the dignity of every human being."

"Growing up as an 'out' teen on Cape Cod not long ago, there was no GSA at my high school and nearest LGBT youth resource was an hour drive away. I was fortunate – I had a supportive family and adult role models – but too many LGBT young people in Massachusetts are not," said Julian Cyr, Chair of the Massachusetts Commission on LGBT Youth. "Governor Patrick has been a true partner to the Commission and a leader for improving the lives of young people across the Commonwealth. We look forward to continuing that momentum as we work with state agencies to advance changes in service delivery and education policy to close the gaps that still persist for LGBT youth."

In June 2012, the Governor participated in the Commission's 20th anniversary public hearings for youth and adults across the Commonwealth to assess the strengths and needs of LGBT youth. While the climate for LGBT youth has improved, especially in Massachusetts due to sustained state investment in specialized health and social services, educational law and policy, and community-based advocacy, significant health disparities remain. According to the 2011 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey, gay, lesbian and bisexual youth in Massachusetts are: seven times more likely to have attempted suicide in the past year; twice as likely to skip school because of feeling unsafe; twice as likely to have been injured or threatened with a weapon at school; and two times as likely to be bullied. They are also almost three times as likely to get pregnant or make someone else pregnant and twice as likely to report current tobacco use.

The recommendations that emerged from those hearings focus on three themes critical to LGBT youth: access to services; training and education around sexual orientation and gender identity; and nondiscrimination policies and guidance. The Patrick Administration has been working closely with the Commission to implement these recommendations. Through agency liaisons, members of the Commission are collaborating with senior managers at respective agencies to close gaps in access, training, and non-discrimination.

Thanks to the strong partnership between the Administration and the Commission, the following FY14 recommendations have already been met:

#### **Department of Children and Families**

Recommendation: Improve access to safe homes by identifying LGBT-friendly foster placements, hotline homes, and residential facilities.

- Identification and tracking of safe homes requires that family resource workers raise the question as part of the home study process for new foster families, and as part of the re-licensing process for continuing foster families. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is working to update the foster parent home study form to ask families whether they would be affirming placements for LGBTQ youth.

- The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) has established a working group to map the resources currently available to LGBTQ youth in the Commonwealth including, but not limited to, safe homes and residential facilities. The group includes representation from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Children, Youth, and Families at EOHHS, the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Youth Services, the Department of Transitional Assistance, the Department of Mental Health and members of the Massachusetts Commission on LGBT Youth.

Recommendation: Provide training programs for all workers and supervisors on the issues that affect LGBT youth and adults.

- DCF has approved a revised training module for new foster parents and adoptive parents on caring for LGBTQ youth. One change includes the removal of references to “gender identity disorder” from participant and trainer guides due to changes in practice guidelines within the psychiatric establishment. The Department is partnering with community initiatives, such as Connect To Protect, to provide continued training opportunities to current foster and adoptive parents in an effort to identify appropriate placements for LGBTQ youth and increase foster and adoptive parents’ ability to properly care and support LGBTQ youth.
- DCF is implementing a new training module for new DCF supervisors and social workers on working with LGBTQ youth and adults.

#### **Department of Youth Services**

Recommendation: Continue to implement comprehensive LGBT training curriculum for staff.

- The Department of Youth Services (DYS) held two day-long trainings for senior staff in the spring, conducted by the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) Youth Support Project, a program of Health Imperatives. DYS is continuing to work with the GLBT Youth Support Project to develop of comprehensive training curriculum and training schedule for all DYS staff.

#### **Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

Recommendation: Add a question on gender identity to the 2013 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MYRBS) survey.

- DESE is including a question on gender identity in their 2013 MYRBS. This represents an important step forward that has been long advocated for by members of the LGBT community. The new question will allow data collection and analysis of trends in the health and safety of transgender students.

Recommendation: Conduct a public presentation of the results of the 2011 MYRBS to the Board of Education within the next six months.

- DESE is committed to hosting a presentation within the next six months.

#### **Department of Early Education and Care**

Recommendation: Provide LGBT cultural competency training for program providers.

- EEC held two regional conferences for early education and out-of-school time professionals, guidance counselors, crisis counselors, and others working with children and families around the issues of adoption, being in a family with LGBT parents or children, or being dual language learners. These full day conferences examined the challenges and risk factors each of these groups face, how these issues manifest in schools, and how educators can modify their practice to better serve these children and families. They were held November 19 at UMASS Amherst and November 26 at Bridgewater State and were co-sponsored by the Commission.

These actions build upon the Patrick-Murray Administration's commitment to supporting LGBT Youth.

In 2010, the Governor signed a landmark anti-bullying law to empower and educate students and make schools safer. In 2011, the Governor signed a Gender Identity Bill to extend critical protections to transgender residents, in housing, employment, education and protection from hate crimes. The Administration is currently working to ensure equal accommodations for transgender students in schools and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has moved swiftly to amend regulations to protect all students regardless of their gender identity and expression. The Administration has also established the Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Commission with a focus on addressing homelessness among LGBT youth population.

"The Commission and this report demonstrate that Massachusetts is well ahead of the curve when it comes to addressing the needs of LGBT youth," said Senator Stanley Rosenberg. "There is still work to be done and this report lays out the steps necessary to ensure that LGBT youth have a voice and that state government is responsive to the diverse needs of the community."

"The focus on our youth is critical. We know LGBT youth do better when their specific needs and concerns are addressed," said Representative Carl Sciortino. "I applaud the Commission for doing such a thoughtful job and look forward to working with the Administration and colleagues to implement the recommendations."

"We're excited to see Commission's latest recommendations, which particularly focus on the needs of youth who face the greatest health disparities: LGBT youth of color, transgender youth, homeless and other youth facing economic challenges," said Grace Sterling Stowell, Executive Director of the Boston Alliance of LGBT Youth (BAGLY). "As the oldest and largest LGBT youth organization in the state, we know first-hand the significant health disparities among this population. We also applaud the Patrick Administration's continued leadership and support of this most vulnerable community of young people."

"There are young people who are queer all across the Commonwealth. In holding hearings in Western Massachusetts [in June 2012], the Commission made sure that youth from all corners of the state were able to give feedback and have a voice," said Amy Epstein, Program Manager of the Holyoke Youth Task Force. "When you grow up in Western Massachusetts, or other parts of the state far from Boston, many LGBT youth feel isolated and excluded. These Recommendations, and the hearings that preceded them, acknowledge that what our youth are going through is important to state leaders."

The Commission on LGBT Youth is established by law as an independent state agency to recommend and advocate to all branches of state government effective policies, programs, and resources for LGBT youth to thrive. Founded in 1992 as the first body of its kind in the nation, the Commission has been advocating for LGBT youth wellbeing in and out of school for the past twenty years.

**Members of the MA Commission on LGBT Youth**

Coco Alinsug of Boston

Michel Anteby of Cambridge

Claire Berman of Watertown

Roger Bourgeois of Middleton

Carly Burton of Boston

Sean Cahill of Beverly

Julian Cyr of Truro

Kristen Davies of Hyannis

Marc Dones of Boston

Julian Dormitzer of Jamaica Plain

Emilia Dunham of Jamaica Plain

Athena Edmonds of Belmont

Chet Franczyk of West Springfield

Kirsten Freni of Winthrop

Pam Garramone of Somerville

Mara Glatzel of North Truro

Donna Harlan of Haydenville

Kathleen Henry of Jamaica Plain

Cory Hernandez of Cambridge

Thomas Hyde of Boston

Nicolas John of Boston

Rachel Kahn of Jamaica Plain

Zach Kerr of Methuen

Stewart Landers of Boston

Alisha Lemieux of New Bedford

Arthur Lipkin of Cambridge

Rebecca Liu of Cambridge

Diana Marcus of Lexington

André Morgan of Somerville

Adrienne Mundy-Shephard of Cambridge

Jonathan Nardi-Williams of Tyngsboro

Brett Nava-Coulter of Jamaica Plain

Robyn Ochs of Jamaica Plain

Susan Rees of Brookline

John Reidy of Boston

Erika Rickard of Cambridge

Cathy Samples of Jamaica Plain

Erica Scott Pacheco of Rehoboth

Brandon Sides of Amherst

Leandra Smollin of Roslindale

Grace Sterling Stowell of Cambridge

Colby Swettberg of Boston

Nicholas Teich of Newton

Ture Turnbull of Jamaica Plain

Vilma Uribe of Dorchester

Phil Veysey of Boston

Gypsy Vidal of Somerville

Ashley Waterberg of Brookline

Jason Wheeler of Everett

Alexis Yioulos of Babson Park

Alex Zafris of Boston

[Read the Recommendations](#)