

NYS Budget Hearing
November 30, 2007

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Long Island GLBT Services Network

>> Long Island Gay and Lesbian Youth (LIGALY)

>> Long Island GLBT Community Center (The Center)

>> Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE-LI)

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Good morning. Thank you for holding these hearings and listening to the many and diverse voices of New York.

My name is David Kilmnick and I am the Chief Executive Officer of Long Island Gay and Lesbian Youth (LIGALY,) The GLBT Center of LI (The Center) and Services and Advocacy for Gay Elders-Long Island (SAGE-LI) – three organizations providing critical health and human services to LI’s GLBT community throughout the lifespan that make up the LI GLBT Health and Human Services Network.

First, I would like to thank Governor Spitzer for the significant investment he made this year to the well-being of GLBT people across the state by providing \$6 million in the state budget for LGBT health and human services. We are grateful for the federal, state and local support that has enabled us to expand our programming to meet the growing needs of LI’s GLBT community. I am proud to announce that this year we have launched a totally new organizational structure designed to provide these services in a more efficient and cost effective manner. Recognizing that nonprofit agencies need to develop innovative and smart ways to provide critical services in difficult economic climates, we are confident that this new structure can serve as a model for other organizations across New York State.

Before I talk more about this model, I want to share with you a little history about LIGALY. I started the organization 14 years ago when I was a Masters of Social Work student at Stony Brook University. Since that time, LIGALY has grown into one of the largest LGBT youth groups in the nation, providing services to more than 35,000 people annually through support programs at our Bay Shore Center, and our satellite offices in Roslyn and Westhampton Beach, and also through the 98 school districts with which we partner.

During these 14 years, as kids have grown into young adults, they have asked me why services for GLBT people stop after they turn 21. Amazingly enough, the fact is that there were no other existing organizations on Long Island providing services to GLBT adults or seniors. As a consequence, thousands of GLBT people came to us each year came for our assistance.

Four years ago, we decided to do something about this problem and decided to launch two other nonprofit organizations - The Center and SAGE-LI. Before we took this step, we held focus groups with hundreds of Long Island GLBT people and families to find out what they needed. The focus groups clearly demonstrated to us that there was a great demand for programs designed to meet the needs of GLBT adults and seniors. The challenge for us was to figure out the best way to provide services, hire and pay qualified administrative and program staff, and install the appropriate financial management systems while meeting the needs of our existing clients.

After considering many alternative models and conferring with many experts in nonprofit management, we decided that it was time for us to move into a new paradigm or new way, if you will, of structuring our service delivery model so that it meets the needs of individuals across their lifespan. I am excited today to share how we developed this model with you. First, we formed an association called the LI GLBT Services Network to which LIGALY, The Center, and SAGE-LI all belong. The Network provides administrative support, financial management and shared overhead expenses so that more than 90% of the monies generated through governmental grants and private efforts are dedicated to programs and services instead of administration and overhead. All three organizations share in common three different locations to serve people living across a 1,200 square mile region. In this structure, they share administrative and development staff and offer each

other collaborative and complimentary programs and services. For example, the Anti-Violence Project is housed in The Center and provides much needed services for victims of domestic violence and hate/bias crimes, but also addresses youth bullying and elder abuse as well. There is no need for LIGALY and SAGE-LI to have its own anti-violence programs to address these issues and spend more money to do so. With our AVP staff able to provide these cross-over services, this system of collaboration and complimentary programming has proven to be financially and programmatically efficient.

In my role as CEO of all three organizations, I enjoy a special and unique vantage point to see the emerging and unmet needs of LI's GLBT community:

1. For youth – there still is much harassment in schools and they feel unsafe. They are teased, bullied and drop out of school at higher rates than their heterosexual peers. They also make up over 60% of homeless youth and have great difficulty accessing current services because the institutions they wind up going to are very much like the homes they were thrown out of – unsafe and unwelcoming places. LIGALY is working to train other agencies and schools to be more culturally competent and deliver better services by working together. However the need keeps growing.
2. For adults – Health disparities are alarming for the GLBT adult community. Crystal methamphetamine is a silent epidemic in the LI adult GLBT community that is destroying lives by lost jobs, homes and families. This problem has a great personal and economic impact on the communities in which these individuals live. This devastation can be prevented. Our crystal methamphetamine program has reached many LI individuals and substance abuse agencies, but the need is much greater than the resources. Bias crimes and attacks (whether reported or not) and domestic violence within the GLBT community are also on the rise. Our AVP program is designed to address these problems and there is a funding stream to help programs like ours. Unfortunately, these monies have made its way to every other region in New York State, but Long Island. We need your help to show that LI community members are important too.

3. For seniors - I believe that services for GLBT seniors will take increasing prominence in the coming years. Along with the rest of the baby boomer generation, more numbers of GLBT people are aging. Today, we're seeing the first generation of GLBT people that has been willing to take advantage of services targeted especially to the aging members of our community and this number is growing exponentially. Yet, the needs of this population are likely to be very challenging. Seventy-five years ago, most GLBT people got married to opposite sex partners and had children. Even if they ultimately came out and identified themselves as gay, they still had their kids and these children were available in a caretaking role. Today, we are dealing with the first large groups of GLBT seniors who did not get married and who, by and large, do not have children. The question is who will be their caretakers? We here at SAGE-LI and others living on Long Island must help to figure this out and develop programs that address this emerging need.

As you can see, the needs are great. However, I think that you can agree we have designed an organizational structure that provides quality services to Long Island's GLBT community in the most efficient and cost effective way possible. We hope that you will consider this model as one that can be replicated in other regions of the state and that deserves to be supported in next year's budget.

Thank you, once again, for giving me the opportunity to share with you the story of how one organization figured out a way to use its limited public dollars to maximize the health and well-being of GLBT living on Long Island by creating an innovative organizational structure that addresses the unique needs of this particular community.