

EMPIRE STATE PRIDE AGENDA

Testimony for Joint Legislative Hearing of the 2013-14 Health Budget

From the Empire State Pride Agenda

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The Empire State Pride Agenda is New York's statewide lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights and advocacy organization. Since 1994 we have been proud to work with a coalition of nearly 60 service providers to decrease health disparities in LGBT communities all across New York State. Through collaboration and resource-sharing, LGBT organizations have made substantial gains in producing positive health outcomes for some of New York's most underserved citizens. From substance abuse education, treatment and prevention to direct primary healthcare services, LGBT-serving organizations are providing culturally competent services to communities that are disproportionately impacted by health disparities while simultaneously encountering several barriers to access healthcare.

Unfortunately the new Outcome Based Contracting proposal in the 2013-14 Executive Budget would have a profound impact on LGBT organizations. Since 1997, the Legislature has worked with the Department of Health to allocate funding specifically for LGBT health and human services. Even during some of the worst economic times of our state, funding for LGBT health and human services has always been clearly earmarked within the budget. Under the 2013-14 Executive Budget, the LGBT Health and Human Services Initiative would be consolidated into a large pool of competitive funding that would also include HIV, STD and Hepatitis C services. This pool of funding will also be receiving a 10% cut with no clear plan on how the cut will be addressed. The funding for LGBT health and human services would then be allocated completely at the discretion of the state health commissioner. We demand that the funding for LGBT health and human services be lined out in a clear, transparent and responsible manner as has been the practice in prior years.

Equally troubling is the prospect of this funding being competitively bid on an annual basis. The LGBT Health and Human Services Initiative has funded through 5-year RFAs and will begin a new 5-year cycle on June 2013. For many of the organizations serving LGBT communities, they simply do not have the capacity to continue applying for their funding each year. The LGBT Health and Human Services Initiative has a clear history of effective and efficient use of its funding to deliver outcomes to over 800,000 LGBT New Yorkers and their families annually. LGBT-serving organizations have already developed strong evaluation protocols to ensure they are providing the best services possible. The state should not create an unnecessarily onerous

process that will severely cripple – and outright delay – the provision of services to LGBT New Yorkers.

According to the 2011-2012 Annual Report of the NYS LGBT Health and Human Services Network, almost 70% of Network organizations have operating budgets of less than \$1 million and 26% of Network organizations rely on state funding for more than half of their operating budgets. Any cut to this critical line of support will have a tremendous impact on LGBT organizations. While we understand the need to search for savings during these tough economic times, balancing the budget on the backs of those who are most in need of services is not an appropriate or sensible approach. We sincerely hope that the Legislature can continue to support the health and wellbeing of our communities and will consider the dangerous consequences of the 2013-2014 Executive Budget.

For more information regarding the impact of the 2013-14 Executive Budget on the LGBT Health and Human Services Initiative, please contact Jonathan Lang, Director of Government Projects and Community Development at 518-649-8136 or jlang@prideagenda.org.