

ASSEMBLY BILL 959

THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER DISPARITIES REDUCTION ACT

ASSEMBLYMEMBER DAVID CHIU

BILL SUMMARY

Assembly Bill 959 would ensure that California public policy meets the needs of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) communities.

This bill would require various state agencies that provide health and human services to members of the LGBT community to collect voluntarily provided information about sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in the regular course of collecting other types of demographic data. AB 959 would also require that the aggregated SOGI data that act as indicators of disparities be reported to the Legislature and made publicly available.

NEED FOR AB 959

Due to the systemic exclusion of data collection of LGBT communities, significant disparities in their health and welfare have been prolonged compared to the broader community. LGBT communities face disproportionately high rates of poverty, suicide, homelessness, isolation, substance abuse, and violence, and low rates of health insurance. These issues are more prevalent for youth and seniors, communities of color, and transgender and undocumented communities.

Collecting voluntary data on SOGI is a necessary first step to understand the extent to which LGBT communities are experiencing disparities and whether government programs are effectively reaching LGBT individuals in need of care and assistance.

BACKGROUND

Specific data collection for California's LGBT communities is critically important for the state to provide appropriate services. Currently, California does not consistently collect demographic data related to SOGI. The following are examples of the limited data available for the LGBT community.

- Data from the 2013 California Health Interview Survey shows that:
 - One-third of lesbian couples and 20.1% of gay male couples without a high school diploma are in poverty, compared to 18.8% of different-sex married couples;
 - African American same-sex couples have poverty rates more than twice the rate of different-sex married African Americans;
 - Among women 18-44 years old, more than a quarter of bisexual women are poor (29.4%) and more than 1 in 5 lesbians are in poverty (22.7%).
- We know from various studies, including those by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Institute of Medicine, that health disparities impacting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are real. These disparities include: higher risk for cancer, mental illness, and other diseases, as well as higher rates of smoking and substance abuse.
- According to the California Department of Justice, in 2013, hate crimes with a sexual orientation bias motivation were the second most common type of hate crime, comprising 25% of all hate crimes.

A comprehensive landscape of data incorporating the needs and trends in every community is imperative to reducing disparities and ensuring that all Californians receive the care and services they need. It is high time for the LGBT community to count and be counted in California.

SUPPORT

- Equality California (Sponsor)
- National Center for Lesbian Rights

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