

April 19, 2019

Honorable Evan Low
P.O. Box 942849
Room 4126
Sacramento, CA 94249-0028

SUBJECT: SUPPORT AB 650 (Low) – LGBTQ Mortality Data

Dear Assemblymember Evan Low,

I am writing on behalf of the Bay Area Municipal Elections Committee (BAYMEC) in strong support of AB 650, which would expand efforts to collect LGBTQ mortality data.

BAYMEC is a political action organization that has advocated for the civil rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people since 1984 in the counties of San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz and Monterey.

Data is an important means of understanding community health and public safety, and is instrumental in the evaluation of government and non-profit programs. Mortality statistics can be harnessed to inform policy to improve quality of life, and to reduce preventable deaths. Many demographic data points are recorded in relation to violent death, including age, gender and ethnicity. Sexual orientation and gender identity (SO/GI) demographic information is not routinely collected, unless it is found to directly relate to the cause of death. Other demographic groups can comparatively analyze mortality statistics to identify problems and develop data-informed solutions. The LGBTQ community is lacking information that could be extremely beneficial for suicide and violence prevention programs.


Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 10 to 24 in the nation, and LGBTQ youth are disproportionately impacted by thoughts of suicide and suicide attempts. LGBTQ youth are almost 3 times more likely to seriously contemplate suicide as their heterosexual peers, and almost 5 times more likely to have attempted suicide. LGBTQ youth who come from highly rejecting families are 8.4 times as likely to have attempted suicide compared to youth from more accepting homes. Among the transgender community, 40 percent of trans adults report having attempted suicide, 92 percent of whom attempted before the age of 25.

These statistics highlight just why it is so critical that information about sexual orientation and sexual identity are collected after death.

AB 650 will build upon California's work in guaranteeing equality for LGBTQ people by expanding efforts to collect SO/GI data in cases of violent death. Organizations and agencies will be able to use this data to inform the development and analysis of programs to help reduce the amount of preventable LGBTQ deaths.

It is for these reasons BAYMEC strongly supports AB 650.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul A. Escobar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "E".

Paul A. Escobar
BAYMEC President