

## President's Message

# June 2019

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As we begin to celebrate LGBTQ Pride Month, we are so fortunate to be here in Palm Beach County, where so much progress has been made over the past three decades.

Please join [Palm Beach County Human Rights Council](#) (PBCHRC) supporters and allies at our Summer Pride Happy Hour, which will be held on Wednesday June 12, from 6-8 p.m. at [Meat Market](#), 191 Bradley Place in Palm Beach. There will be Happy Hour-priced drinks, complimentary hors d'oeuvres and valet parking. If you plan on attending, you must RSVP by clicking [here](#).

Unlike Floridians living in close to 90% of Florida's 67 counties, Palm Beach County's LGBTQ residents are protected from discrimination in employment, housing and the full range of public accommodations. In addition:

- Palm Beach County public school students are protected from bullying and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity - and there are serious consequences for teachers and other school district employees who let bullying and harassment go unreported.
- Lesbian and gay couples - regardless of whether they

are married - and their children are entitled to many of the same benefits as other families.

- Conversion therapy for minors is prohibited throughout the entire county.

### **TALLAHASSEE WRAPUP**

Unfortunately, safeguarding the rights of the LGBTQ community was still not a legislative priority during the 2019 session of the Florida Legislature, which ended in early May. However, I want to share with you the progress we made this year and the work that lies ahead for the 2020 legislative session.

For more than a decade, PBCHRC has been advocating for statewide legislation to protect the LGBTQ community in employment, housing and public accommodations. During the past ten legislative sessions, we have supported Equality Florida's efforts to enact the Florida Competitive Workforce Act (FCWA), despite the bill's obvious shortcomings.

For example, if FWCA were ever enacted, it would still be absolutely legal almost everywhere in Florida for LGBTQ people to be discriminated against in bakeries and flower shops, schools, gyms and health spas, golf courses, daycare centers, senior citizen centers, medical offices, hospitals, adoption agencies, grocery stores, clothing stores, shopping centers, banks, accountants' and lawyers' offices, pharmacies, insurance agencies, museums, libraries, galleries, parks, zoos, amusement parks, laundromats and dry-cleaners, barber shops and beauty shops, funeral parlors, homeless shelters and almost all other places where people gather. (Fortunately, LGBTQ people in Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade Counties are already protected against discrimination in all of the listed public accommodations - and more.)

Since 2010, PBCHRC has called upon Equality Florida to include the more expansive definition of public accommodations in FCWA; however, our request has repeatedly fallen on deaf ears. PBCHRC again calls on Equality Florida to update their bill prior to the 2020 legislative session so that LGBTQ Floridians could be fully protected in

FCWA ever becomes law.

Although FCWA had a record number of cosponsors this year, it was once again obvious that the bill was dead on arrival. As expected, the bill failed to get a hearing in either the Florida Senate or House of Representatives.

While PBCHRC continues to support FCWA, this year PBCHRC joined SAVE Florida, TransLatina, former State Representative David Richardson and other LGBTQ organizations and activists statewide to support a new alternative strategy and a new bill - the Florida Inclusive Workforce Act (FIWA).

The FIWA strategy starts by protecting the entire LGBTQ community from discrimination beginning with employment protections. The strategy is a multi-step process to ban discrimination against LGBTQ people in all aspects of our lives, beginning with employment security. This process saw encouraging results this year. SAVE Florida secured State Senator Joe Gruters, chair of the Republican Party of Florida, as the lead sponsor of the legislation.

Unfortunately, as soon as FIWA was introduced, Equality Florida's staff launched a campaign falsely attacking the bill, SAVE Florida and PBCHRC, as well as personally attacking David Richardson and me. Despite this, SAVE Florida built an impressive coalition to secure strong bipartisan support to constructively build upon as we head into 2020 legislative session with a two-bill strategy.

Thanks go out to the Palm Beach County legislators who cosponsored both FIWA and FCWA- State Senators Lori Berman (D-Lantana) and Kevin Rader (D-Boca Raton) and to State Representatives Joe Casello (D-Boynton Beach), Al Jacquet (D-Lantana), Tina Polsky (D-Boca Raton), David Silvers (D-Lake Clarke Shores) and Matt Willhite (D-Wellington).

## **STATUS UPDATE**

### **CONVERSION THERAPY BANS COURT CHALLENGES**

Last summer, Liberty Counsel, an anti-LGBTQ hate group, filed suit in federal court on behalf of two licensed therapists

seeking to nullify the ban on conversion therapy for minors enacted by Palm Beach County and the City of Boca Raton. The lawsuit is virtually identical to one filed by Liberty Counsel last December against the City of Tampa.

Although several lawsuits have been filed across the United States seeking to overturn conversion therapy bans, not a single one has been successful. In fact, on four occasions, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to take up cases challenging the bans. However, as the Supreme Court turns further and further to the right on social issues, Liberty Counsel is seeking another chance to allow therapists to abuse LGBTQ children through conversion therapy.

Unfortunately, things did not go well in the Tampa lawsuit. U.S. District Court Judge William Jung recently granted Liberty Counsel's clients motion for a preliminary injunction. Therefore, at least for the time being, it remains legal for conversion therapy practitioners in Tampa to continue to "treat" children with "talk therapy" pending a trial on the merits later in 2019.

In contrast, in the case filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida in West Palm Beach by two local conversion therapy practitioners recruited by Liberty Counsel, U.S. District Court Judge Robin Rosenberg issued a well-reasoned 60 page ruling denying the request for the preliminary injunctions. In doing so, she handed LGBTQ children in Palm Beach County a significant victory. At least for the time being, young LGBTQ people in Palm Beach County will remain safe from the psychological abuse caused by a handful of quacks who would like to resume practicing conversion therapy here.

Liberty Counsel immediately appealed Judge Rosenberg's ruling to the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeal and PBCHRC will keep you posted as developments occur.

### **THE DANIEL S. HALL SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARDS**

Having reviewed a record number of applications for the Daniel S. Hall Social Justice Awards, Eric Burchill and Kavyasree Chigurupati, graduating seniors at Wellington High

School and

the A.W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts, respectively, were awarded the scholarships by PBCHRC Treasurer Dan Hall. And thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, each recipient was presented with a check for \$2,000, instead of the \$1,000 checks that have been given since the program's inception.

Special thanks go out to PBCHRC Vice President Carly Cass, who coordinates the scholarship program.

### **PBSO LGBTQ LIAISON**

Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradsaw has created an LGBTQ Liaison Unit to promote a positive relationship between PBSO and the LGBTQ community. Only two other sheriff's departments in Florida have established similar units. Sheriff Bradshaw appointed PBSO Lieutenant Beth Krivda, Detective Roham Rashtchy and Deputy Michelle Bonan to serve as the initial liaisons. The liaison can be reached by contacting Lt. Krivda at 561-688-4863. PBCHRC Board Member Chauncy Graham is working with the unit to assist in the development of policies and protocols.

### **CURRENT INITIATIVES**

- PBCHRC Board Member Meredith Ockman is working with West Palm City Commissioners Christina Lambert and Kelly Shoaf, along with Compass, on initiatives to assist LGBTQ youth and seniors.
- PBCHRC has asked West Palm Beach Mayor Keith James to consider installing an LGBTQ Pride Rainbow Crosswalk at a location.
- To help make trans and gender nonconforming residents and visitors feel more welcome, PBCHRC has asked Mayor Keith and the West Palm Beach City Commissioners to change the unisex signs on single-

stall restrooms in City Hall and all other municipal buildings to be "All-Gender."

For more than three decades, the Palm Beach County Human Rights Council has worked diligently on behalf of the LGBTQ community. With your support, we will continue to do so in the years to come - and we will keep you posted on our progress.

Happy Pride Month!

Judge Rand Hoch (retired),

President and Founder