



2022 JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING on WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

January 31, 2022

Greetings Liz Krueger, Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, and Helene Weinstein, Chair of the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, and distinguished members of this committee. My name is Elisa Crespo, I'm a transgender advocate and the Executive Director of the NEW Pride Agenda, a statewide LGBTQ+ education and advocacy non-profit. I'm delighted to share testimony today on the topic of state workforce development programs and their impact on the LGBTQ+ community.

I'd like to take a moment to talk specifically about the transgender community, the most marginalized community in the LGBTQ family. Historically, transgender people have suffered from high rates of unemployment due to the everyday hiring biases, on-the-job discrimination, lack of legal protections and wage inequities. To put it into context, a 2011 survey by the Williams Institute found that the unemployment rate for transgender workers was double the rate of the population as a whole (14% compared to 7%), with transgender people of color reaching an unemployment rate that is four times the national average. The survey also found that transgender people are nearly four times more likely to have a household income under \$10,000 per year than the population as a whole (15% vs. 4%).¹

According to a 2019 Williams Institute analysis, about one-in-five or 22% of LGBTQ adults in the United States live in poverty compared to an estimated 16% poverty rate among their straight and cisgender counterparts. Specifically, 29% of transgender people were reported to be living in

¹ <https://www.lgbtmap.org/file/a-broken-bargain-for-transgender-workers.pdf>

poverty, while for Black (40%) and Latinx (45%) transgender adults the poverty rate was forty and forty five percent respectively.²

With respect to COVID-19's impact on the LGBTQ+ workforce, it's worth noting that forty percent of all LGBTQ people work in industries that were most affected by the pandemic. Comparatively, only 22% of heterosexual people work in those same industries. Those industries include restaurant and food services, healthcare, education and retail.³ Moreover, for the first time in history the latest version of the United States' Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey (HPS) asks about sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). The survey released earlier this year found that 13% of LGBTQ adults lived in a household where there was sometimes or often not enough to eat in the past seven days, compared to 7% of non-LGBTQ+ adults. Notwithstanding, 37% of LGBTQ+ adults lived in a household that had difficulty paying for usual household expenses in the previous seven days, compared to 26% of non-LGBTQ+ adults, while 20% of LGBTQ+ adults reported lost income in the past four weeks, compared to 17% of non-LGBTQ+ adults.⁴

It is true that every community regardless of race, sexual orientation or identity has faced economic challenges and hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it cannot be denied or understated how much the novel coronavirus has negatively impacted the employment status of the LGBTQ+ community. The state of New York is not immune to this unsettling truth. Even here, in one of the wealthiest states in the union, there is disproportionate income inequality, high unemployment and massive segregation amongst our LGBTQ+ community. We must and we can do something about LGBTQ+ poverty in the state of New York.

I humbly ask the members of this committees to work to advance robust public investments in the LGBTQ+ community, particularly transgender people and LGBTQ+ youth who make up 40% of the homeless population⁵ in this country. I ask that you provide investments in the LGBTQ+ communities that are outside of the five boroughs of New York City, where there are

² <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/National-LGBT-Poverty-Oct-2019.pdf>

³ <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/National-LGBT-Poverty-Oct-2019.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products/household-pulse-survey.html>

⁵ <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/lgbtq-youth/homelessness>

still long-standing disparities in the distribution of funding. I encourage you to consider a Public-Option for Employment, or a program that creates and provides jobs for targeted vulnerable populations living under the federal poverty level. Doing so would increase our state's tax base and increase revenues for small businesses. I ask that you work with your colleagues in government and the Executive Chamber to create targeted and specialized programs that seek to eradicate poverty and homelessness in all communities, especially the LGBTQ+ community. Whether through pilot programs carried out by state agencies or otherwise, the LGBTQ+ community demands increased investments, particularly as the state receive billions of dollars in unrestricted funding from the federal government. New York State has a moral imperative to increase the socioeconomic status of marginalized communities, of which the LGBTQ+ community belongs to.

I also ask for your consideration of a transformative Transgender Wellness and Equity Fund similar to the one created by the state of California last year and funded at \$13 million. This Fund would provide health care services for transgender, gender non-conforming, and intersex people. It would also provide resources for mental health programs, medical services, and supportive housing assistance specifically for transgender, gender non-binary or intersex people. This is a critical moment in New York's history. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to invest in what is largely ignored, a deeply marginalized community. The TGNC Wellness and Equity Fund would help balance the violence, rampant unemployment, and housing discrimination that many members of the TGNC community endure. It is way past time to deal with the resultant unstable living situations, hunger, physical and mental health issues, lack of education and job training as well as the increased levels of incarceration that our community faces.

Thank you.

Elisa Crespo

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