

April 2, 2021

Assemblymember Dr. Jim Wood
Chair, Assembly Committee on Health
State Capitol, Room 6005
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assemblymember Mark Stone
Chair, Assembly Committee on Judiciary
1020 N Street, Room 104
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1094 (Arambula) - Support for LGBTQ mortality data collection

Dear Assemblymembers Wood and Stone,

The Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research (CLEAR) writes to express our support for Assembly Bill 1094 (Arambula), which will improve the quality of information about LGBTQ communities in the State of California by collecting sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) mortality data. The bill establishes a pilot program in select California counties to train coroners and medical examiners to collect and report SOGI information in violent death cases, such as suicide and homicide.

CLEAR is a nonprofit organization that produces information, education, and advocacy to promote the economic and financial wellbeing of LGBTQ households, organizations, and communities in the United States. Our work focuses on closing gaps for LGBTQ people's health and economic wellbeing regarding access to wealth, community information, policy, and goods and services in the market. In creating our research, CLEAR uses data from federal and state government sources, nonprofits, and private sources.

LGBTQ communities continue to experience higher rates of violence because of anti-LGBTQ stigma in the United States, particularly those who are transgender, gender nonconforming, and people of color. Attacks and hate crimes against LGBTQ people have been on the rise in recent years in crime statistics from the FBI—16.7% of hate crimes in the U.S. in 2019 were based on sexual orientation 2.7% were based on gender identity.¹

Internalized stress induced by anti-LGBTQ stigma and violence negatively affects LGBTQ people's psychological health, leading to higher rates of depression and suicidal ideation.² LGBTQ youth and young adults are much more likely to consider and attempt committing suicide seriously. The Trevor Project reports that in 2020 that 40% of LGBTQ youth, and over half of transgender youth, had seriously considered suicide.³ The HRC reported in December 2020 that four in ten transgender adults had attempted suicide, with a majority having done so before age 25.⁴

The present deficit of SOGI data in mortality data collection leaves informational gaps in understanding the rates of completed suicides and fatal violence for LGBTQ communities. Such data is crucial for

¹ FBI, *2019 Hate Crime Statistics: Incidents and Offenses* (last accessed April 02, 2021) <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2019/topic-pages/incidents-and-offenses>

² Anthony Fulginiti, *Sexual Minority Stress, Mental Health Symptoms, and Suicidality among LGBTQ Youth Accessing Crisis Services*, J. YOUTH & ADOLESCENCE (2020) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-020-01354-3>

³ THE TREVOR PROJECT, *National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2020* (last accessed April 02, 2021) <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/The-Trevor-Project-National-Survey-Results-2020.pdf>

⁴ HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN, *Dismantling a Culture of Violence*, (December 2020) <https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/files/assets/resources/Dismantling-a-Culture-of-Violence-010721.pdf>



understanding public health issues such as anti-transgender violence, suicidality among LGBTQ youth, and fatal encounters for LGBTQ people with law enforcement.

Collecting SOGI data will inform data-driven policies and programs to create high-impact solutions to present public health problems for LGBTQ communities and enable ongoing evaluation of those solutions' effectiveness in the future. An overwhelming majority of people support the collection of LGBTQ mortality data. In a recent Morning Consult poll, more than four-in-five adults felt it was important to include sexual orientation and gender identity in suicide and other violent death statistics (84%).⁵ That poll also showed bipartisan support for collecting this data, including 91% of Democrats, 80% of independents, and 77% of Republicans.

Californians need public health policies and programs that are evidence-based using high-quality information. Passing AB 1094 will catalyze much-needed data-driven solutions for LGBTQ communities in California. For the reasons explained above, we ask that you support Assembly Bill AB 1094 (Arambula) and continue California's leadership in LGBTQ health.

For any questions regarding this letter, please contact Spencer Watson, Executive Director for CLEAR, at spencer@lgbtq-economics.org or (415)-278-7358.

Sincerely,



Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research
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⁵ THE TREVOR PROJECT, First-of-Its-Kind LGBTQ-Inclusive Life Data Bill Introduced in California (February 22, 2021) https://www.thetrevorproject.org/trvr_press/first-of-its-kind-lgbtq-inclusive-life-data-bill-introduced-in-california/