



Legislation Text

File #: 23-0670, Version: 1

Recommendation to request City Manager to work with the Health and Human Services Department to develop guidelines for the collection and reporting of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) data by city departments that provide health care and other social services to better understand and improve the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ Long Beach residents.

Background:

The City of Long Beach is committed to using data to identify the needs of Long Beach residents and to evaluate whether the City is effectively and equitably meeting those needs. In recent years, Long Beach has been a trailblazer among California cities in its efforts to collect demographic data on racial inequities in our healthcare, grant-making, and contracting systems. The Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initial Report called on the City to, “increase the quality, use, transparency and public availability of data to inform institutional decisions and actions that improve outcomes in Black communities and communities of color.”¹ Long Beach took this challenge in stride, using data-informed methods to prioritize an equitable distribution of CARES Act and American Rescue Plan Act funds through the Long Beach Recovery Act (LBRA), with an emphasis on supporting communities of color that were hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. These grant disbursements were tracked and made available to the public via the [Long Beach Recovery Act Updates Dashboard](#), which provides disaggregated data on LBRA beneficiaries by race and ZIP code.

City staff has since built on the success of the LBRA dashboard, publishing a new [Homelessness Emergency Dashboard](#) earlier this year. The dashboard has drastically increased the city’s transparency around its homeless services provision and better informed public discourse on solutions to Long Beach’s housing crisis. The dashboard provides data on homeless services disaggregated by race, age, and length of homelessness, all of which help inform policymakers in their response to the crisis.

The Opportunity: Given the City’s demonstrated ability to use data to identify and address disparities among residents with regard to race and ethnicity, we have an opportunity to evaluate how these same collection and reporting practices can be used to identify and respond to disparities in Long Beach’s LGBTQ+ community.

Historically, LGBTQ+ communities have encountered many barriers when trying to access basic government services like public assistance benefits, healthcare, housing, and homeless services. In the City of Long Beach, departments that provide critical public services do not yet have a consistent or coordinated way of collecting information on the sexual orientation or gender identity of the clients they serve. As a result, it is difficult to quantify the needs of Long

Beach's LGBTQ+ population, to identify programs in which they are underrepresented or underserved, and to track improvement in access to services over time.

Despite Long Beach's receipt of eleven consecutive perfect scores from the Human Rights Campaign's [Municipal Equality Index](#), there is still much work to be done to improve the quality of life and experiences of Long Beach's LGBTQ+ residents.² The 2023 Homeless Point in Time Count identified 386 LGBTQ+ people experiencing homelessness, up from 353 in 2022. Compared to last year, the proportion of LGBTQ people among the total unhoused population increased from 10.7% to 11.2%.³ Although SOGI data on Long Beach's overall population is difficult to find, UCLA's Williams Institute estimates that LGBTQ+ individuals constitute 5.1% of the population of the Los Angeles and Orange County metropolitan area.⁴ If these proportions held for Long Beach, it would mean that LGBTQ+ individuals are significantly and disproportionately overrepresented in the homeless population of Long Beach. Additionally, according to the Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services' most recent [STD/HIV Monitoring Report](#), Long Beach's incidence rate of new HIV infections in 2020 was 21 per 100,000 individuals, more than the County of Los Angeles and almost triple the state average.⁵ Despite the current lack of widespread data collection, research suggests that LGBTQ+ communities face disproportionately high rates of poverty, suicide, homelessness, isolation, food insecurity, substance abuse, and violence.

Collecting demographic data on sexual orientation and gender identity is necessary to understand the extent to which LGBTQ+ people are experiencing disparities in health and well-being, and whether Long Beach's programs and services are reaching LGBTQ+ people in need of care and assistance. There are many public policy benefits to collecting SOGI data. Knowing a client's sexual orientation and gender identity can help identify risk factors, tailor treatment protocols, improve health outcomes, and address prevalent health disparities. SOGI data also serves to acknowledge and affirm LGBTQ+ people. A person's sexual orientation and gender identity is a part of who they are - a part that is often invisible, but one that many LGBTQ+ people want to be acknowledged.

Collection of SOGI data is already common practice at the California Department of Public Health after the passage of AB 959 (Chiu) in 2018, and as of this January, SOGI data is beginning to be integrated into the Federal Department of Health and Human Services' best practices. Other cities in California that provide direct health services at the local level, like San Francisco, have implemented their own SOGI data collection practices to better inform policy and programmatic responses to improve the overall well-being on LGBTQ+ residents.

Every year since 2017, San Francisco's Department of Public Health, Office of Housing and Community Development, Department of Children, Youth, and their Families, Department of Human Services, Department of Disability and Aging Services, and Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing have each published an [annual SOGI report](#) for the previous fiscal year, including analyses of inequities identified among their respective service populations and a report of the efforts each department took to make their service provision more inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community. A similar process across Long Beach city

departments that provide direct health and social services to the public would help create an accurate picture of the present and unmet needs of LGBTQ+ residents and a roadmap toward addressing many of the structural inequities faced by Long Beach's LGBTQ+ community.

As the City of Long Beach contemplates guidelines around the collection, reporting, and use of SOGI data, it should do so in a way that:

- Adheres to all HIPAA and confidentiality policies
- Retains the anonymity of clients and protects personally identifiable information from unauthorized disclosure
- Clarifies that the provision of SOGI information is voluntary, and that no services shall be denied to clients who decline to provide such information
- Offers standardized SOGI definitions to ensure consistency in data collection and reporting
- Ensures cultural competency and sensitivity training for City staff who may participate in data collection efforts
- Aligns with existing demographic data collection practices that the City already employs in order to streamline and reduce the costs of gathering this information

A city that truly honors and recognizes the contributions of its LGBTQ+ community needs to be proactive in identifying the challenges, barriers, and inequities that this community faces. With the rights and dignity of LGBTQ+ people under attack across the country, it is imperative that the City of Long Beach double down on its efforts to empower LGBTQ+ youth and adults, and improve both the City and the public's understanding of how we can better support Long Beach's LGBTQ+ residents.

This matter has been reviewed by Budget Manager Grace H. Yoon on June 13, 2023.

[Timing Considerations]

This recommendation requests the City Manager to work with the Health and Human Services Department to develop guidelines for the collection and reporting of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) data. Initial funding of \$100,000 would be needed for the design of the guidelines, staff and community provider training, and a needs assessment related to better understanding the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ Long Beach residents and the services needed. This funding can be discussed as part of the FY 24 Budget development process. This recommendation is anticipated to require a moderate level of staff hours beyond normal budgeted scope of duties and is expected to have a moderate impact on existing City Council priorities.

Approve recommendation.

MAYOR REX RICHARDSON

