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Revision: The transgender community faces restroom issues, harassment and bias violence

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included gender identity in their anti-discrimination code. Nationally, five states and 61 cities have adopted similar protections.

About 45 people attended the meeting at the Council Chamber in City Hall. Ten people gave personal testimonies to either support or oppose the proposed code change.

Mayor Kitty Piercy attended the hearing and said after the event, "the city should provide the same protections for all our citizens."

Boyd Iverson of Eugene, who opposed the city code revision, said, "I do strongly believe in human rights, and human rights are all inclusive; but rules should not be passed that infringe on the rights of others." He argued that to allow a small minority of people to act inconsistently with the average habits would violate others, particularly women and children.

Mayor Jim Torrey's concerns for privacy in public facilities and the potential costs of transgender accommodations in bathrooms,

showers and locker rooms remained prevalent for many of the speakers at Tuesday's hearing.

Bert Vaughn, a Lane Community College student and member of the Queer-Strait Alliance, attended the hearing to support the queer community. "I think it will pass, but I don't support the (public accommodations practices) amendment," Vaughn said.

In fact, four of the 10 speakers at the hearing agreed with previously voiced concerns regarding the public accommodations practices amendment, which would allow transgender people to choose which restroom, shower or locker room to use.

Besides the restroom and locker room issues, the commission's packet lists several other problems the transgender community faces, including employment, dress codes, prisons, passports, name changes and pronouns, bias crimes and violence. Of the approximately 100 transgender people who live in Eugene, 60 percent reported being targeted for harassment or violence,

while less than one-tenth of 1 percent have contributed to violent crimes, according to the packet.

The commission stated that this was a one-time public hearing. Carmen Urbina, vice chair of the commission, said each testimony will be taken into account and final decisions on code revisions and recommendations will take place in July. A city council work session, public hearing and a final decision will likely take place in the fall, Urbina said.

More information is available at Eugene Human Rights Commission Web site, www.ci.eugene.or.us.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

The City of Eugene Human Rights Commission encourages Eugeneans to share their opinions regarding this issue.

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Graduates: Teachers, family and community members were all honored at the ceremony

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to introduce and speak personally about each student. The small-scale graduation ceremony also allowed each student's family the opportunity to speak.

"It was very emotional and there were a lot of tears," Garcia said. "Mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, and aunts and uncles stood up and said how important it was to see their kids succeed." Children and family members look up to these graduates because they show that success is an option, Garcia said, "and not just a high-school diploma or undergraduate degree, but a masters."

The commencement allowed the Sapsik'wala graduates to celebrate in their own "appropriate place and way." During the ceremony, the students showed a Powerpoint presentation with photographs of the Native American students during various community projects and COE rallies.

A large portion of the ceremony was spent honoring those who helped the students achieve their success. Besides the graduates' parents, two advisory retirees were honored as well as several community and program staff members. The students surprised the master of ceremonies by changing the schedule of the event and having each student speak about the contributions that Garcia made to their experience at the University. The honorees, as well as the graduates, were given traditional Pendleton blankets.

"It was an incredible community event to see the success of these students," said Johnny Lake, Ph.D. student and GTF in Institute for Leadership and Diversity in Education. The highlight of the ceremony seemed to be the role of the teachers in the success of the students, "who are otherwise unsupported and underrepresented," Lake said.

"We all felt honored to bring our families and community to the

longhouse together because our families and community are the reasons we came here in the first place and the reason our degrees have any meaning at all," Bear said.

The Native American Initiative, which was started by former University President Myles Brand, funds the Many Nations Longhouse that opened in January and the Sapsik'wala Program that aims to improve Native American education. The goal of the initiative was to make the University a center for Native American training and research.

Recent discrimination charges from the College of Education and allegations of a lack of diversity at the University remain topics of concern for the COE (ODE, May 12).

"It's important that the University become more diverse and that these events and communities be seen not as exceptional to the University," Lake said.

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