

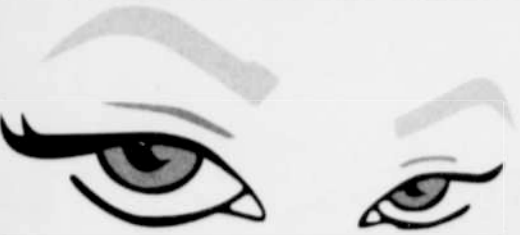
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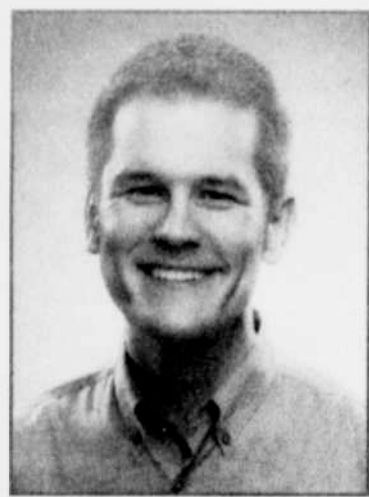
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Standing for Trans Rights

Portland City Council approves health care coverage
for transgender city employees

BY ERIN ROOK

Portland became the third municipality in the country to eliminate all transgender-related health coverage exclusions June 8 when the Portland City Council voted unanimously to approve Mayor Sam Adams' proposal to include medically necessary surgeries to the health plan for city workers.

The mayor said in his opening comments that extending full coverage to transgender city employees is both good business and the right thing to do. Adams pointed out that, in addition to Multnomah County and San Francisco, a number of major corporations such as Nike, Kraft and Coca-Cola already provide such benefits, but said that, above all, extending coverage is an issue of basic fairness.

"To the trans community of Portland, who each and every day makes this city a better place, it is my honor and privilege to serve on a city council that can bring an ounce of fairness in return," Adams said.

About 130 trans folks and allies showed up to the meeting wearing blue and stickers provided by Basic Rights Oregon. As Commissioner Amanda Fritz pointed out, both levels of the chambers were standing room only.

Of the 16 people who gave testimony, only two were opposed to the mayor's proposal. One argued that the city already provided "Cadillac" health care coverage, and that the crowd ought to be offering thanks rather than asking for more. The other claimed that God doesn't support gender transition and

that trans folks ought to seek spiritual solutions.

Though neither of those opposed addressed the issue of medical necessity, it is a question many have posed on the mayor's Facebook page, in comments on news sites and in private conversations even within the

LGBTQ community.
Jeana Frazzini, executive director of Basic Rights Oregon, tackled the topic head-on in her opening remarks.
"The American Medical Association has identified transgender health care as being medically necessary," Frazzini said. "Yet many transgender Oregonians are routinely denied the ability to purchase health insurance or are denied coverage for basic, medically necessary care solely because they are transgender."

-MAYOR SAM ADAMS

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health, whose standards of care are internationally accepted, has released a statement on the "Medical Necessity of Treatment, Sex Reassignment and Insurance Coverage in the United States" that makes clear that sex reassignment surgery is neither cosmetic nor elective and ought to be considered as any other medically necessary treatment would be.

"Sex reassignment, properly indicated and performed as provided by the Standards of Care, has proven to be beneficial and effective in the treatment of individuals with transsexualism, gender identity disorder and/or gender dysphoria. Sex reassignment plays

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