

nwnews

marriage matters before making a determination about going to the ballot."

Lambda Legal Sues State of Oregon on Behalf of Transgender State Employee

On June 21, Lambda Legal announced it was filing a lawsuit on behalf of Alec Esquivel, an Oregon state employee who was denied insurance coverage for medically necessary surgery because he is transgender.

According to his doctors, Esquivel, a 41-year-old law school graduate and clerk for the Oregon Court of Appeals, is at a heightened risk for uterine and ovarian cancer due to the hormone therapy he's taking as part of his treatment for Gender Identity Disorder. Esquivel was assigned female sex at birth and was diagnosed with GID in 2001. The medically necessary procedure in question is a hysterectomy.

"Alec Esquivel was denied coverage for a medically necessary procedure specifically because he is transgender. This type of discrimination is unlawful and risks the health of hardworking, productive citizens of Oregon," said Dru Levasseur, transgender rights attorney at Lambda Legal via media briefing. "By not covering this procedure, the state is refusing to provide him with the same health care coverage as his co-workers."

The lawsuit was filed against the Public Employees' Benefit Board arguing that Oregon's anti-discrimination law prohibits an employer from denying insurance coverage on the basis of gender identity. GID is a serious medical condition recognized by the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association and others, with treatments ranging from hormone therapy to sex reassignment surgery.

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 neces-

sary surgeries to the health plan for city workers.

"My doctor has determined that this procedure is necessary for me," said Esquivel. "Other people who work here and who need this very same procedure get the coverage they need. Why shouldn't I?"

Just Out will follow this story as more information becomes available.

New Pivot Billboards Go Up, Community Weighs In

Cascade AIDS Project's Pivot program launched a new billboard campaign June 27, in part as a response to the anti-gay attack on Pivot coordinator Brad Forkner and his boyfriend Christopher Rosevear in late May while crossing the Hawthorne Bridge. The couple's attack sparked a photo shoot campaign dubbed "Love is Courageous," from which the images used on the billboards were chosen.

Last June, Pivot mounted a similar campaign to promote its transition from being known as the Men's Wellness Center by putting up billboards—on which the image of two men kissing drew minor controversy from community members, including conservative radio host Lars Larson. The new billboards also feature gay male couples, some in embrace, some kissing. While the billboards haven't been up long enough to generate much discussion, some in the community have weighed in.

Jeremy Haddenham expressed chagrin over what he thought was a better opportunity to portray inclusivity in the image of the LGBTQ community.

"Personally, I feel there should have been more of a diverse cross section represented on them," says Haddenham. "The public perception of gay men has always been clean-cut, preppy types. It would be nice to see bears or 'harder edge' type couples represented as well."

Michael Sorensen, CAP's director of development, helped bring the photo shoot project together, and was pleased with the finished product.



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