

# This Pride, we affirm the right of equal health care for all

**BY JIMMY RADOSTA**  
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

Every June, LGBTQ communities around the world come together to celebrate their resilience, strength and activism. The annual parades and events commemorate the Stonewall Riots of

1969, when LGBTQ people stood up to police brutality and pushed back against systematic discrimination, affirming their right to be themselves, safely and proudly. Today, that fight for full civil rights continues.

Many young people have found the courage and support to be their most authentic selves because of the brave pioneers who came before them. Yet despite the recent gains made in marriage equality and the increasing visibility of LGBTQ people in the media, athletics and the military, LGBTQ rights are in a precarious state. We face a conservative backlash and a government stacked with people determined to strip away our rights and push them back into the darkness of the closet.

As a healthcare provider and educator, Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette (PPCW) understands that LGBTQ people often come through our doors with the weight of the world on their shoulders. It's why we are proud to reaffirm our commitment to their rights and health – providing compassionate health care and sexual health information, no matter who they are or where they live.

Members of the LGBTQ communities have unique health care needs. They

experience greater obstacles to obtaining and benefiting from sexual and reproductive health services than non-LGBTQ people. Those with layering identities – whether as a person of color, a person who may be low income or someone who is undocumented – can face even more barriers to care. At PPCW, we take pride in providing high-quality, compassionate health care for LGBTQ people in our community, including vital healthcare services like routine cancer screenings, STI testing and treatment and birth control – regardless of sexual orientation, gender expression or gender identity.

In Oregon, we're proud to be one of 17 states where Planned Parenthood offers hormone replacement therapy, either estrogen or testosterone, for transgender patients. We see this critical service as one that goes to the heart of our mission: care, no matter what. In fact, from 2013 to 2015, there was an 80 percent increase in Planned Parenthood affiliates that reported offering hormone replacement therapy for transgender patients.

Gay and bisexual men, and transgender women – particularly those of color – continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV. At PPCW, we provide HIV testing and links to care, and we now offer pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), a daily drug regimen that helps prevent HIV when taken correctly.

We also know that LGBTQ youth lack accurate and queer-inclusive sex education. PPCW strives to offer such programs, as well as provide safe and supportive environments that allow youth to get the information and support they need to make healthy decisions and feel comfortable in their identities.

We have seen truly appalling bills and rhetoric targeting transgender and gender-

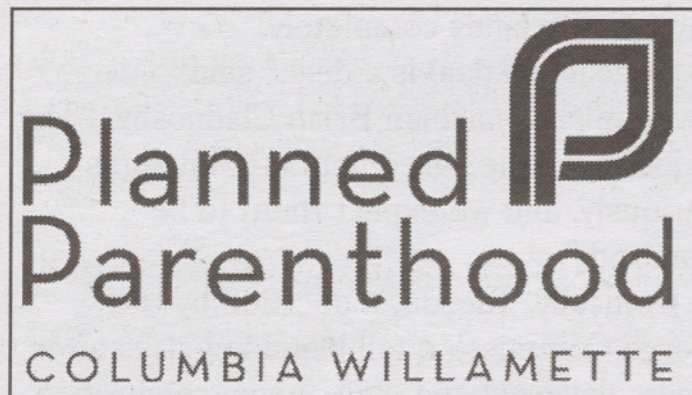
nonconforming people in the past two years. Planned Parenthood believes that these senseless bathroom laws popping up around the country invent a nonexistent issue and lead only to discrimination and harassment – and that everyone should be able to use the public restroom that corresponds with their gender identity.

Planned Parenthood is proud to be part of the Pro-Choice Coalition of Oregon, which has proposed landmark legislation to remove procedural barriers to reproductive health coverage that disproportionately impact transgender and gender-nonconforming Oregonians. The Reproductive Health Equity Act (House Bill 3393) will prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity to improve access to necessary and lifesaving preventive services.

LGBTQ people, young and old, have found the courage to stand up to oppression year after year, and to push this country forward. Pride Month is the perfect time for their parents, relatives, neighbors, colleagues and friends to also stand firm against those who would seek to deny rights or services to LGBTQ people, simply because of who they are or who they love.

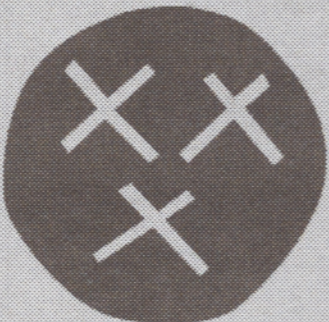
Everyone deserves access to expert, affordable health care and protection from discrimination, no matter where you live or how you love. Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette understands that the struggle for LGBTQ liberation is deeply connected to justice for all. Today, we reaffirm our commitment to building a world where no one experiences discrimination or violence because of their gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation.




*For more information about STI testing, or to find a health center near you, visit [PPCW.org](http://PPCW.org).*




*Jimmy Radosta is the Media Relations Director for Planned Parenthood Columbia Willamette, the largest nonprofit provider of sexual and reproductive health care and youth education programs in Oregon and Southwest Washington.*

**SISTERS OF THE ROAD.org**



Dine  Barter  Share 

133 NW Sixth 503.222.5694



Did you serve in the **Armed Forces** and are experiencing or at risk of becoming homeless?

**Transition Projects**

Please call 855.425.5544 or visit 650 NW Irving Street