

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the City Commission

FROM: Commissioner Laura Dominguez

DATE: January 31, 2024

SUBJECT: REFERRAL TO THE FINANCE AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCY COMMITTEE FOR A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE MBPD'S LGBTQ OUTREACH INITIATIVES, DISCUSSION OF TYPES OF SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY IN THE CITY, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO STI AND/OR DRUG TESTING SERVICES, AND EXPLORATION OF COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN THE CITY, NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND LOCAL ESTABLISHMENTS TO STRENGTHEN AND PROMOTE THESE CRUCIAL SERVICES IN THE CITY.

I would like to refer a discussion to the Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee for comprehensive review of LGBTQ outreach initiatives and social services programs available to the LGBTQ community in the City, including, but not limited to, STD and drug testing, and exploration of collaborations between the City and non-profit organizations and local establishments to strengthen and promote these crucial services.

Florida's implementation of aggressive anti-LGBTQ policies in the last few years has detrimentally affected the LGBTQ community in the state. Policies enacted by the state legislature have targeted education, health, and overall quality of life of the LGBTQ community. The well-being of our LGBTQ community is a matter of paramount importance, and a thorough examination of the City's existing outreach initiatives and available social services is essential.

As part of this discussion, the Miami Beach Police Department should be prepared to give an update on its SAFE Place Program and whether it would be beneficial to enhance the Program to solidify the City as a safe and welcoming environment for the LGBTQ community. Since its initiation, many new businesses have opened up in the City, and this program, emphasizing safety and support, can be a beacon of inclusivity and a symbol of our commitment to the well-being of all residents and visitors.

Furthermore, the Committee should discuss potential partnerships between the City, non-profit organizations, and local establishments to expand on already existing social services for a more effective approach to delivering these services. For example, Pridelines, a grassroots 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, offers free HIV/STI testing, support groups, and community engagement programs at the LGBT Community Center located at 1130 Washington Avenue in Miami Beach. Similarly, other agencies provide

much-needed drug testing services, i.e. for members of the gay community rehabilitating themselves as they recover from the challenges associated with addiction.

Stephán Ginez, the owner of the Hotel Gaythering, which is Miami Beach's only gay-owned and operated hotel, has expressed a willingness to collaborate with the City to make available similar services at the hotel, in conjunction with potential non-profit partners.

As the Hotel Gaythering serves as a popular social spot for both locals and visitors, a collaboration with the Hotel Gaythering would present a unique opportunity to extend the reach of social services organizations to a wider audience. Partnering with establishments like Hotel Gaythering can increase accessibility and participation in crucial programs such as HIV/STI testing in a more inclusive and supportive environment. To this end, Commissioner Fernandez has referred a companion item to the Land Use and Sustainability Committee to amend the City's Land Development Regulations to allow for temporary testing at hotel establishments like the Gaythering. This referral is intended to complement such efforts and identify how the City could serve as a catalyst for protecting the health and welfare of our local LGBTQ community.

A partnership that brings together local establishments and non-profit agencies has the potential to enhance the reach and impact of social services programs, creating a more supportive environment for the LGBTQ community. I look forward to discussing this concept further with my colleagues and local stakeholders.