

GAY ACTIVISTS ALLIANCE
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TESTIMONY OF GAY ACTIVISTS ALLIANCE ON D.C. BUDGET PRIORITIES

Presented to the Budget Committee, D.C. City Council

February 26, 1975

Members of the Committee: My name is Craig Howell. I am vice president of the Gay Activists Alliance of Washington, D.C., Inc. With me today are Mr. Cade Ware, President of GAA/DC, and Mr. Tim Corbett of the Gay Men's V.D. Clinic. It is a privilege to talk with you this afternoon to present our organization's recommendations on priorities for the Fiscal Year 1976 budget for the D.C. government. We commend this committee for conducting these hearings to learn how we, the people want our tax dollars spent.

It is a sad fact that until now the specific needs and problems of the more than 50,000 gay women and men in this city have been largely ignored during the budgetary process, even though we contribute some 10% of the District's taxes. We believe that our legitimate interests should be vigorously presented before the new home rule District government--and we hope our new government will listen and act accordingly. GAA's appearance here today hopefully marks the beginning of a new relationship between gays and our District government. Too often in the past the government has neglected and abused us; it is now time for our government to be our friend.

The Gay Activists Alliance has adopted the following positions on the D.C. budget for FY 1976:

(1) The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) should be expressly forbidden to spend any money to use plainclothes police to enforce the statutes on sodomy and solicitation for so-called lewd and immoral purposes (SLIP), and no funds should be allocated to the MPD to maintain the Prostitution, Perversion, and Obscenity (PPO) Branch of the Morals Division. We estimate that the termination of the MPD's entrapment campaign against gay men would save the taxpayers at least \$1 million a year in direct budgetary costs.

(2) Funds should be allocated to the Department of Human Resources (DHR) so that it can financially support the Gay Men's V.D. Clinic. This proposal would cost approximately \$125,000 in FY 1976. We believe we can conclusively demonstrate that services by gay men for gay men is the only effective method to deal with the V.D. epidemic in the gay community.

(3) Funds should be allocated to the Office of Human Rights (OHR) so that it can hire additional staff to enforce Title 34, the D.C. Human Rights Law, and so that it can publicize the Human Rights Law more extensively. Without such additional funding the potential liberating impact of the Human Rights Law will not be fully realized.

In short, we believe that money should be taken away from the Police Department's entrapment campaign against gay men and should be given to agencies that will benefit our gay citizens instead. Not only will the general public welfare be advanced by such reallocations of budget priorities, but the District government stands to make a net savings of funds that can be used for any number of other worthy causes.

During the next few weeks members of our organization will be presenting detailed testimony on each of our recommendations before the appropriate City Council committees. I would like to summarize our stands.

(1) Police entrapment. Since 1972 members of the Metropolitan Police Department have made more than 200 entrapment arrests of homosexual men. In every case the only person who complained of a violation of the laws on sodomy or solicitation for so-called lewd and immoral purposes was a policeman. Most of those arrested for SLIP have been black, and many of these have been transvestites who have been cruelly abused. These arrests serve absolutely no justifiable public purpose and are utterly without redeeming social value.

Yet D.C. taxpayers have been paying a hefty price to indulge the police in their pointless and anti-social practices. Judge Charles Halleck of the D.C. Superior Court has estimated that each such arrest costs the city government \$18,000, including the costs borne by the court system in processing these cases and the costs of maintaining the Prostitution, Perversion, and Obscenity Branch (or "vice squad") and "training" police for PPO's offensive behavior. With more than 70 arrests for alleged SLIP violations by the police annually, the MPD's entrapment campaign is costing the city more than \$1 million each year. GAA has prepared a series of questions which a budget-conscious Council should be eager to ask the MPD to determine more exactly how much the department has been wasting on its entrapment campaign against gay men.

We hope that the Council will appreciate the outrage which gay people feel about the misuse of our own tax dollars to oppress our fellow gays. If you do, we hope you will take decisive action through the power of the purse to end this entrapment campaign at once. We are also demanding that Police Chief Maurice Cullinane endorse this action as a first step to demonstrate his good faith to the gay citizens of this

community. We are further demanding that Mayor Washington also endorse our proposal. The Mayor expressed concern about this area during our meeting with him this past November, and now is the time for him to join with the Council to curb the MPD's blatant anti-gay prejudice.

When plainclothes entrapment is abolished, arrests for sodomy, attempted sodomy, and solicitation for so-called lewd and immoral purposes could be made by uniformed officers--this is the official policy of the U.S. Park Police in the Washington area, for example. We also recommend that the police should have to produce a signed citizen's complaint in court for such cases, as is required by the New York City Police Commissioner. If these reforms were instituted, every need of public order would be satisfied, yet 70-100 gay men each year would be spared the police record, the public humiliation, the threat of losing jobs, friends, and family affection, and the risk of unwarranted confinements in prisons or mental institutions, all of which result from these arrests.

(2) Gay Men's V.D. Clinic. Public health and private medical facilities consistently demonstrate ignorance and insensitivity, if not open hostility, to the socio-medical needs of gay people. For example, gay men, unlike heterosexual men, need tests for rectal and throat gonorrhoea, but these tests are not routinely administered, or even offered, to men appearing for V.D. tests at the Upshur Street Clinic. Requests by gay men for such tests are too often ignored or result in hostile or ridiculing reactions by public health staff. Because of the gross inadequacy of public and private health treatment, the V.D. rate among gay men is significantly worse than for the general population.

Gays do not want to go to non-gay health personnel for testing and treatment, not only because of the inadequacy of the services they receive, but because gays are often afraid to reveal themselves as gays to heterosexuals in such a sensitive context. Thus, even under the best of imaginable circumstances, where public health services were specifically designed to meet the needs of gay people, many gays would not use them. Services by gay men for gay men is the only effective method to deal with the V.D. epidemic in the gay community.

In response to the V.D. crisis among gays, the Gay Men's V.D. Clinic was established in November 1973 to provide V.D. testing and treatment on three hours each Saturday afternoon in the facilities of the Washington Free Clinic. The Clinic has had enormous success, yet its full capabilities have not been

used because of severe funding limitations. Therefore, the Clinic is asking the D.C. government to appropriate approximately \$125,000 in FY 1976 for three broad purposes:

- (1) to expand existing V.D. diagnostic and treatment services at the Clinic;
- (2) to improve the quality of service delivery; and
- (3) to undertake an extensive community and educational outreach program designed to meet the socio-medical needs of gay men, and to reduce the incidence of V.D. in the community.

A complete, detailed proposal is virtually finished and will soon be submitted to the Department of Human Resources for their evaluation. We have been told by top DHR personnel that such funding would be impossible for FY 1976 because of the overall budget restrictions. Our reply is that we are not taking the requested funds away from any other part of DHR's activities but are instead reallocating funds from the MPD's entrapment campaign. Therefore, we ask the members of the Council to tell DHR to evaluate the Clinic's proposal on its merits rather than dismiss it out of hand because of budget restraints.

(3) Enforcement and publicity for the Human Rights Law. The District of Columbia enjoys what is probably the most comprehensive anti-discrimination law in the country, Title 34, the D.C. Human Rights Law. This statute prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, banking, credit, and so on, based on race, sex, religion, national origin, and

many other categories--including sexual orientation. The Gay Activists Alliance is proud of the role our group played in lobbying for passage of Title 34. Since this law was enacted on November 16, 1973, GAA has actively sought to make gay women and men in this city aware of the protection we now have, and we have filed a number of complaints against business establishments, both gay and straight, which have violated this law.

It is therefore highly frustrating that the staff of the Office of Human Rights has not been expanded to cope with the increased caseload resulting from passage of Title 34. Several of our complaints have been pending for too long because of the great backlog of cases within the Office of Human Rights. We realize that Congress has been in part the villain in this instance, for it has turned down the increased funding authorized by the District government. We deeply resent this colonialist and reactionary attitude of Congress, and we will be testifying before Congress on this issue.

We also strongly recommend that additional funds be granted to the Office of Human Rights to publicize Title 34 more extensively. Some businesses apparently are totally unaware of this law and therefore continue to discriminate against gays. Victims of unlawful discrimination too often do not make complaints to the Office of Human Rights because they do not know their rights or they do not know how to make a complaint. Sometimes even the police do not seem to know about Title 34.

To illustrate how such funds might be used, posters should be distributed for public display to all business establishments affected by Title 34, particularly those in the public accommodations and banking fields. Presently, posters on Title 34 rights have been printed only for employment and housing. The Office of Human Rights should insure that the police are fully informed about Title 34, and a review of other city agency regulations may be required to insure that the government is not directly or indirectly breaking the law. Spot public service announcements on radio and television have often been used to good effect by anti-discrimination offices in other jurisdictions, and the District should follow suit. Implementation of such steps requires added money, which could also be taken from the MPD's entrapment operation.

Thank you, members of the committee, We would be glad to answer any questions you might have for us.