Transgender Law Center

January 2, 2013

Covered California
560 J Street, Suite 290
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: LGBT Health Facts and Resources

Dear Covered California Board and Staff:

I thank you for the opportunity to have served on the Expert Panel on Health Disparities at the December 18, 2012 meeting of the Board. I am pleased to see Covered California addressing the unique opportunities for reducing health disparities through the health insurance coverage that will be offered through the California Health Benefit Exchange. I offer the below comments as a follow up to my presentation and hope the below resources are useful moving forward.

A population of particular concern to us is the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) population. Sources such as the Institute of Medicine, Healthy People 2020, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the *National Healthcare Disparities Report* indicate that LGBT individuals and their families are disproportionately likely to live in poverty, to be uninsured, and to face substantial barriers to quality health care, including refusals of care, substandard care, inequitable policies and practices, and exclusion from health outreach or education efforts. As a result, the LGBT population experiences significant disparities in health indicators such as smoking, obesity, experiences of abuse and violence, mental and behavioral health concerns, and HIV infection. These inequities may be even more pronounced for LGBT people who are also members of other groups that are disadvantaged on the basis of factors such as race, ethnicity, geography, or disability.

Numerous sources testify to the fact that the LGBT population experiences significant health disparities:

- **Healthy People 2020** – "If a health outcome is seen in a greater or lesser extent between populations, there is disparity. Race or ethnicity, sex, sexual identity, age, disability, socioeconomic status, and geographic location all contribute to an individual's ability to achieve good health."
- **Healthy People 2020 LGBT Health topic area** – "Research suggests that LGBT individuals face health disparities linked to societal stigma, discrimination, and denial of their civil and human rights."
- **Institute of Medicine report, The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People: Building a Foundation for Better Understanding** – "LGBT individuals experience unique health disparities."

- **Office of Minority Health, The National Stakeholder Strategy for Achieving Health Equity** – "…a body of evidence continues to expand, which documents the existence of other health disparities by, for example, gender, literacy level, sexual orientation or gender identity, disability status, geography, and age."
- **Health Equity and Accountability Act, H.R. 2954** – "Health disparities are a function of not only access to health care, but also the social determinants of health—including…sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or disability status—that directly and indirectly affect the health, health care, and wellness of individuals and communities."

These sources all reflect the understanding that health disparity populations are diverse and that racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other disparities cannot be fully addressed in isolation from the disparities associated with stigmatized sexual orientation and gender identity. Accordingly, we wish to provide a compendium of additional information on LGBT health disparities to complement the other disparities resources that Covered California has compiled.

Resources on LGBT Health Disparities

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, *National Healthcare Disparities Report* (2012), available from http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/nhdr11/nhdr11.pdf

Department of Health and Human Services, "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health" (2010), available at http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/overview.aspx?topicid=25

Institute of Medicine, The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People: Building a Foundation for Better Understanding (Washington: National Academies Press, 2011), available at http://www.iom.edu/lgbthealth

Institute of Medicine, "Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Data Collection in Electronic Health Records: A Workshop" (Washington: National Academies Press, 2012), available at www.iom.edu/lgbtdata

Jaime M. Grant and others, "Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey" (Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011), available at http://www.thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/ntds

The Joint Commission, "Advancing Effective Communication, Cultural Competence, and Patient- and Family-Centered Care for the LGBT Community: A Field Guide" (2011), available from http://www.jointcommission.org/assets/1/18/LGBTFieldGuide.pdf

Lambda Legal, "When Healthcare Isn't Caring: Lambda Legal's Survey on Discrimination against LGBT People and People Living with HIV" (2010), available at http://www.lambdalegal.org/publications/when-health-care-isnt-caring

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, "Top Health Issues for LGBT Populations" (2012), available at http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Top-Health-Issues-for-LGBT-Populations/SMA12-4684

Thank you again for your attention to LGBT concerns as you work to address health disparities through the Exchange. Should you have any questions about these resources, please contact Alice Kessler, Legislative Advocate, at akessler@lawpolicy.com or (916) 341-0808.

Sincerely,

Masen Davis
Executive Director
Transgender Law Center