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Carolina Almonte
Executive Director

LGBTQ+ Commission – YOUTH WORKING GROUP

Meeting Minutes
January 8, 2025
Location: Zoom

Present: Emmy Howe, Sukia Akiba, Cindy Telingator, Bill Barnert
Members of the Public: Bourin You (DCF), Karen Manna (DCF)

Absent: *n/a*

Meeting Chair: Emmy Howe

- 1. Call to order**
- 2. Assign minute taker (Bill)**
- 3. DCF (Mass. Dept. of Children & Families) Presentation**
 - Some New Business was moved up the agenda so Bourin & Karen could present
 - Presentation by Bourin You, the recruiter for LGBTQ+ welcoming families, and Karen Manna, the foster care ambassador for LGBTQ+ welcoming foster homes. They introduced us to the foster care system in Massachusetts & how it works. Their goal is to build more foster care homes in Massachusetts that are LGBTQ+ affirming.
 - Foster parents fall into three categories: Kinship; Unrelated; Pre-adoptive
 - All potential parents must be LGBTQIA+-affirming
 - Massachusetts is “Canon Family First” state
 - Karen & her husband have been foster parents for 23 years
 - Q: “How can we help you?” A: This meeting is a good first step. We can share information back & forth. We can collaborate on tabling at events. We can publicize their efforts in our newsletter.
 - [] Action Item Bill: Get blurb for newsletter from Bourin
 - Q: “Can we get a copy of your slides?” A: No, but Bourin can send a summary.
 - [] Action Item Bill: Get summary of slides from Bourin

- Q: Do you have many single foster parents? A: Of 40 families in the office now, about half are single parents.
- Q: Of the different outcomes (foster-to-adoption, stay with same foster parents, go home, move from one foster household to another, etc.), what typically happens? A: Most eventually go home, but it can take a long time. Unfortunately, some do “bounce around” the system. They need more foster homes.
- Q: Would it be useful to (or do you already) do queer-specific introductions or gatherings? A: Not yet, but they are willing to come to anything, and are open to collaboration. If you know of someone interested in fostering a queer teen (for example), give them Bourin’s info: BOURIN YOU – Bourin.You@mass.gov – (978) 275-6800.

4. Old Business

- Follow up and updates: Welcoming school reading on February 28th which is sponsored by HRC – LGBTQ+ Commission voted to co-sponsor the event with the library.
 - Emmy & Phoebe Hallahan (LGBTQ+ Programming Director) will be meeting with Ruby Vail (Manager of Branch Services, Central Square Library) on Monday to pursue. Sukia volunteered to help.
- Follow up discussion of the YWG from before COVID. What has been done in the past for the youth group. [Tabled]
 - What challenges are they facing?
 - How inclusive are the schools?
 - Should we invite kids to our meeting or go to them?
 - Consider how best to interface with LGBTQ+ youth.

5. New Business

- Discussion of adding youth members to the commission [Tabled]

6. Next Meeting Date and Time

- Wednesday, Jan. 29th, 2025 -- Zoom

7. Adjournment