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The Effect of Oregon's Potential Budget Cuts on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People and Their Children

On January 26th, 2010, Oregon voters will vote on two legislative tax initiatives. Measure 66 would increase the marginal tax rate on personal income above \$250,000 for couples, and Measure 67 would increase the \$10 minimum corporate tax and increase marginal tax rates for businesses earning in excess of \$250,000. Together, these measures will help Oregon confront its budget shortfalls by increasing revenues by as much as \$730 million, over 5% of the currently approved general fund budget.¹ If voters reject these measures, the legislature may substantially decrease spending on social services and programs.² Such cuts would negatively affect many individuals and families in Oregon's LGBT community, particularly those who are poor, families with children, the elderly, youth in institutionalized settings, the disabled, and those living with HIV/AIDS.

In this brief, we use data from the 2006-2008 American Community Survey (ACS) to estimate the number of Oregonians in same-sex couples who utilize social services and programs. Since that survey predates the recent recession, the current number of affected LGBT recipients is likely to be even higher than the figures presented here. Although the ACS does not include the entire LGBT population, only those individuals that identify as being in a same-sex relationship, or all of the many services and programs offered by the State that are being considered for cuts, the ACS provides a snapshot of same-sex couples in Oregon who may encounter decreased or eliminated services and programs if Measures 66 and 67 fail to pass.

POOR AND LOW INCOME PEOPLE

Recent scholarship has underscored the economic diversity of the LGBT community. For example, according to the 2003 & 2005 California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), 13.4% of lesbian/bisexual women and 7.2% of gay/bisexual men live in poverty, a pattern similar to that found in data on same-sex couples in the United States as a whole.³ If rates are similar in Oregon, then approximately 12,000 LGB people in the state are living in poverty. Surveys of transgender people consistently show alarmingly high rates of unemployment and poverty, as well.

ACS data demonstrate that many LGB people are accessing state and federally funded programs for poor and low-income individuals. For example, 10% of individuals in same-sex couples, or 2,500 people, currently receive food stamps. Although that program is federally funded, many of the individuals and families receiving food stamps are likely to also be participating in other state funded programs and services. In addition, 2% of individuals in same-sex couples in Oregon receive state or local public assistance, 1% receive Social Security Income, and 1% receive Supplemental Security Income, all of which could indicate eligibility for other state programs and services for poor and low income people at risk to cutbacks.

Several important state programs for low-income people are at risk of seeing their budgets cut or possibly face complete elimination. In response to a request from the Oregon Legislative Fiscal Office, the Department of Human Services (DHS) listed vulnerable programs likely to see budget cuts, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Community Mental Health Program Contracts, Medicaid Personal Care Program, State Immunization Program, specific Medicaid optional services, and general education and outreach.⁴

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Given that many social programs focus on school-aged children, it is significant that the children of LGB people are twice as likely to live in poverty as the children of different-sex couples.⁵ Twenty-four percent (3,000) of same-sex couples in Oregon are raising a child under the age of eighteen.

A number of the proposed cuts by Oregon's DHS will impact poor families with children. For example, the Department of Human Services (DHS) list of possible cuts includes the reduction of Oregon's pre-TANF (a state specific supplement to TANF) and the possible elimination of benefits for two-parent unemployed families.⁶ In addition, any cuts to education could adversely affect these same-sex couples' families.

ELDERLY

ACS data show that 6% of individuals in same-sex couples in Oregon are elderly, or 1,400 individuals. Many of cuts cited by the DHS would affect those who are elderly: the elimination of Oregon Project Independence, the elimination of Adult Day Services, and the closure of three non-Medicaid Geropsychiatric Wards.

YOUTH IN INSTITUTIONALIZED SETTINGS

Recent research has shown that LGBT youth make up 13% of young people in the juvenile justice system and 42% of homeless youth.⁷ A number of the proposed DHS cuts might affect the LGBT children and youth in these institutionalized settings: the elimination of the Crisis Case Management System, the reduction of A&D Community Program Contracts (which would jeopardize programs aimed at preventing placement into the juvenile justice system and child welfare system), and the elimination of several family support programs (which may result in more and longer foster care placements).

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Thirteen percent of individuals in same-sex couples in Oregon identify as disabled. In addition, 3% of individuals in same-sex couples identify as having vision or hearing difficulty. Unfortunately, we cannot be certain that these individuals utilize any state programs or services meant for the disabled and/or vision/hearing impaired, but it is likely that some LGBT people with disabilities participate in state-funded programs.

Programs and services benefiting disabled people could also face cutbacks, such as in the Employment and Community Inclusion Program for people with developmental disabilities and the Oregon Commission on the Blind.

HIV/AIDS

A cut to HIV/AIDS programs, such as CAREAssist (Oregon's AIDS Drug Assistance Program), would prove especially harmful to members of the LGBT community. In 2007, a reported 4,727 people were living with AIDS in Oregon, and approximately half of those individuals are men who have sex with men.⁸

SUMMARY

Contrary to popular belief, many LGBT people are not only eligible, but also actively utilize social services and programs. Oregon's budget crisis could pose a significant threat to the services and programs that a sizeable number of LGBT people depend upon daily.

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| LGB Oregonians living in poverty | 12,000 |
| Oregonians in same-sex couples | 24,588 |
| Individuals in same-sex couples who: | |
| Receive Food Stamps | 2,500 |
| Receive state/local assistance | 500 |
| Social Security Income | 250 |
| Supplemental Security Income | 250 |
| Are over 65 | 1,400 |
| Are disabled | 3,200 |
| Same-sex couples raising children | 3,000 |
| Oregonians living with HIV/AIDS | 4,727 |

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher Ramos is a research associate at the Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. His research focuses on the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

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¹ State of Oregon Legislative Fiscal Office. "Budget Reduction Options." December 2009. (Last accessed January 4th, 2010) http://www.leg.state.or.us/budget/budget_reduction_options/RO_LFO_memo.pdf

² The Oregon Legislative Fiscal Office has already asked for the submission of reduction options from state agencies receiving General Fund appropriations in the event that the measures fail.

³ Albeda, Randy, M.V. Lee Badgett, Alyssa Schneebaum, and Gary J. Gates. 2009. "Poverty in the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community." *The Williams Institute*. Los Angeles.

⁴ Oregon Department of Human Services. Detail of 10% Reduction to 2009-11 Legislatively Approved Budget Level. November 2009.

⁵ Albeda, Randy, M.V. Lee Badgett, Alyssa Schneebaum, and Gary J. Gates. 2009. "Poverty in the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community." *The Williams Institute*. Los Angeles.

⁶ Oregon Department of Human Services. Detail of 10% Reduction to 2009-11 Legislatively Approved Budget Level. November 2009.

⁷ Ray, Nicholas. "An Epidemic of Homelessness." National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and National Coalition for the Homeless. 2006. Majd, Katayoon, Jody Marksamer, and Carolyn Reyes. "Hidden Injustice: LGBT Youth in Juvenile Courts." Legal Services for Children, National Juvenile Defender Center, and National Center for Lesbian Rights. 2009. Gates, J. Gary, M.V. Lee Badgett, Jennifer Ehrle Macomber, and Kate Chambers. "Adoption and Foster Care by Gay and Lesbian Parents in the United States." The Williams Institute and The Urban Institute. March 2007.

⁸ Epidemiologic Profile of HIV/AIDS in Oregon 2006. *Oregon Department of Human Services Public Health Division-HIV/AIDS Program*. April 2008. (last accessed December 9, 2009) <http://egov.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/hiv/data/docs/2006final.pdf>