

Nominations for Commission 2008

The Nominations Committee (Jason, Jacob, Grace, Marty, Eleni, and Lisa) reviewed the 12 applications the Commission received for appointments as regional commissioners. Of the 12, we are forwarding 11 to the Commission for approval. The selected applicants represent a diverse group of individuals bringing a range of skills to the Commission and its work. Their appointment will increase the number of commissioners representing communities of color, the transgender community, and youth.

The slate below is presented for your approval. Once approved, the nominations committee will conduct final reference checks before finalizing the regional appointments. * represent nominees who submitted their own biographies.

Doug Bounds - a recent graduate of Worcester Vocational High School and member of SWAGLY, Doug is interested in expanding the number of community youth groups for GLBT youth.

*Edward Byrne - Ed Byrne is Managing Director and President of the Board at Project 10 East, Inc.—a Boston based non-profit organization specializing in helping to create and sustain gay-straight alliances in MA schools. He is also Project Manager at Sametz Blackstone Associates, a brand-focused communications consultancy in the South End of Boston. Ed began working for Project 10 East in 2005 as a part-time program manager while in college. In this capacity he worked in schools every week building gay-straight alliances with students and coaching faculty and administrators on how to make their school a safe place for GLBT youth. In 2005-2006 he was the organization's liaison to the Boston Queer Youth Providers Group and to the task force that developed Boston communication strategy to the ex-gay movement. He has given numerous workshops and participated on panels for high schools and colleges on topics such as coming out, youth leadership, the GSA movement, and community organizing. At Sametz Blackstone he responsible for the coordination of communications strategy and design projects for some of Boston's most respected non-profit organizations including Brigham and Women's Hospital, New England Foundation for the Arts, and the McGovern Institute for Brain Research. He is graduate of St. John's Prep in Danvers, MA and a 2007 graduate of Harvard University where he received his Bachelor's degree in Social Science Studies with a concentration in Political Philosophy.

*Abigail Carpenter-Winch - My name is Abigail Carpenter-Winch, and I am a junior at the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School. I am from Cambridge, MA. I would like to join the Commission because I want to be able to help make important decisions concerning the safety of GLBT youth in Massachusetts. I am involved with several organizations that work to do this (such as the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network and the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition), and I believe that my experience will make a valuable contribution to the Commission.

*Kenneth Garber - Thank you in advance for consideration of my application to the Massachusetts Commission on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth. My name is Kenneth Garber I have been a member of the Waltham Fire Department for 27 1/2 years. I'm a member of Greater Boston PFLAG, MTPC and Dignity Boston. My wife Marcia and I are the parents of a 19 year old transgendered male. My son CJ is a freshman at Lasell College studying Criminal Justice. CJ underwent a double mastectomy in the summer of 2006 and a total Laproscopic hysterectomy this past summer. During this past summer I have been witness to how difficult it is for trans people to make changes to various documents and also to harsh treatment we received from various agencies. I applied to the Commission because I know how difficult it is for trans people and their families to deal with the issue and people involved. I hope that some of our experiences will allow me to help other transgendered people and their families to get through some difficult times. I'm going to try and attend tomorrow evening good luck to all the candidates.

Michael McDonald - Michael, currently a high school student, founded his school's GSA.

*Alex Morse - My name is Alex Morse. I grew up in Holyoke, Massachusetts and I am currently a freshman at Brown University studying Community Health and Political Science. Throughout my high school career, I founded my school's Gay Straight Alliance, and as the group's president I organized the school's first ever school-wide assembly on GLBTQ issues. In addition, I conducted my school's first ever faculty training on homophobia and the creation of safe spaces and classes. Within the community, I founded the Holyoke GLBTQ Taskforce, an organization of youth and adults dedicated to making the city a safer place for GLBTQ people. With this organization, I planned the 1st Annual Western Mass Youth Pride Prom for high school age young people in Western Mass. As for my time at Brown, I was recently elected the Finance Chair of the school's Queer Alliance and co-chair of the Queer Community Committee.

*Rhiannon O'Donnabhain - Rhiannon O'Donnabhain is a lesbian transgender woman. She grew up in a close-knit Irish Catholic family on Boston's South Shore. In the 1960's Rhiannon went into military service after college, enlisting in the Coast Guard. She later worked in construction and as an engineer, in both the public and private sector. Born anatomically male, Rhiannon began having conflicted feelings about her gender identity in elementary school. Rhiannon tried hard to fit into the male role—to do "masculine" things. She married and parented three children. But her strong sense that she was a woman persisted. After her marriage ended in 1992, she began seeing a therapist who evaluated her and diagnosed her with gender identity disorder (GID), a persistent conflict between a person's birth sex and their gender identity. GID is a recognized medical condition requiring medical care in severe cases. In 2001, after she and her health care providers determined that surgery was critical to enable her to live her life as a woman, she underwent several surgeries as part of her course of transition. With GLAD, Rhiannon is suing the IRS, arguing that the medical expenses relating to her transition were for medical care, and therefore deductible. As a Commissioner, she

seeks to: advance the rights of LGBTQ youth through education and public policy changes; provide legal information to youth, legal advocates, and activists; and, advocate for policies and legislation that protect and support LGBTQ youth.

*Marta Rivera Paczynska - Marta Rivera Paczynska is a Ph.D. candidate in English at Tufts, working on a dissertation that explores intersections of family, sexuality, race, and national identity in 20th century anglophone Puerto Rican literature. She is 31, a Puerto Rican woman of mixed ancestry, and identifies as a butch and a queer woman of color. She has served on several university committees, is helping organize a Women's Studies conference, and volunteers in the community. She has taught college first-year classes discussing gender identity, sexuality, and race. She spoke at the rallies and testified at the hearings that helped create the Governor's Commission.

*Kirsten Steinbach - I have been involved – directly or indirectly – with the Commission since the spring semester of 2005, when I was introduced to it by Alex Morash.[...] Since then I have actively participated or participate in several organizations as well as done individual proactivist work with this community and other communities ("other" including environmental conservation work, human rights, etc.). These organizations include, but are not limited to (in no particular order): Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition, MassEquality, Freedom to Marry Coalition, Safe Homes, Supporters of Worcester Area GLBT Youth (SWAGLY), and the College and Young Adult Committee of the Governor's Commission on GLBT Youth, as well as volunteering at Youth and Boston Pride. Other work I have done as an individual proactivist include educating individuals on polyamory, transgender/genderqueer/queer issues, safe space, marriage equality, and pansexuality; being safe space for all people (everyone is celebrated with me); and lobbying state and federal legislators and officials to enact laws and policies that affirm our identities (including non-discrimination laws, hate crimes legislation, and transgender-affirming policies and procedures, etc.).

*Rich Vaden - I am a nineteen-year-old senior at Simons Rock College in Great Barrington Massachusetts. Ever since I came out, I have looked to the gay rights movement for a sense of solidarity, support and guidance. Though I sometimes feel included, more often I feel ignored and even rejected because the issues I care about are considered "third rail" of the movement. I believe there are many more important issues within the gay community than gay marriage and adoption rights. What about issues related to gay youths? Every day, hundreds of gay adolescents come out to their friends and families and are immediately thrown out onto the street or are held captive in their homes. How are we addressing their needs? Though I have been frustrated by the movement's almost complete ignorance of gay youths, my frustration has turned me into a staunch gay activist. When I went to college, I joined my campus' GSA, The Human Rights Campaign, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Now, I am the president of our GSA and I am writing my senior thesis on the formation of the gay identity, with specific focus on gay youth. I bring a great deal of thought and passion to my work as an activist, and I hope I am granted the opportunity to work on these and other issues on the Massachusetts Governor's Commission on GLBT Youth.

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Armando Velez III - a student at Framingham State College interested in building networks to support GLBT college students.