DALLAS – Candidate questionnaires submitted to the Stonewall Democrats of Dallas by candidates seeking endorsement by the group showed unanimous support for transgender inclusive health insurance coverage for City employees. The questions put to each candidate included “Do you support comprehensive transgender inclusive health benefits and as a councilmember [would you] work with the City Manager to implement such benefits?” The unanimous response from respondents was “yes,” with some candidates adding additional information to support their position.

The responses were released during the candidate endorsements that took place between 10:00am and 3:00pm at Resource Center Dallas on March 9, 2013. If the six endorsed candidates all win their elections, the City Council would have six confirmed votes for eliminating current exclusions that deny certain medically necessary procedures to transgender persons simply because of their gender identity. Eight votes are needed for a majority on the City Council.

Earlier this year, Trans Pride Initiative, with the cooperation and support of several Dallas area LGBT and civil rights organizations, brought the issue of insurance coverage exclusions to the attention of the City Council and City of Dallas administrators. The City quickly clarified that their policies, in spite of past coverage denials, should now cover wellness care for transgender persons based on their doctor’s recommendations rather than the gender in the system, counseling related to gender identity (sometimes related to gender dysphoria, often the result of the experience of extreme social stigma), and hormone therapy. With the clarification, Trans Pride Initiative began working to educate City Council members and candidates about the remaining exemptions.

The City continues to regard certain procedures recommended by doctors to address gender dysphoria as “cosmetic,” even though those same procedures are performed for other reasons. This means the City denies coverage for procedures recommended by medical professionals based solely on a person’s gender identity. Eliminating such discriminatory exclusions is supported by numerous professional medical organizations, including the American Medical Association, American Psychological Association, American Psychiatric Association, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Endocrine Society, American College of Nurse-Midwives, National Association of Social Workers, and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health.

Groups specifically supporting transgender persons and advocating for their rights in the Dallas area include Trans Pride Initiative; Black Transmen, Inc.; Transgender Education Network of Texas (TENT); TransElite; and Abounding Prosperity.

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