

# Lakeview coalition discusses homeless, trans rights at meeting

BY JAMIE ANNE ROYCE

Community members gathered at Lakeview Action Coalition (LAC) meeting May 6 at St. Paul's UCC Church, focusing on homelessness, affordable housing and access to health care.

LAC is a nonprofit community organization composed of 49 institutional members, including religious congregations, nonprofit agencies, banks, business associations, a credit union and a senior citizens' caucus.

Transgender people spoke out against mistreatment by police, calling for the passage of the Chicago Police Treatment of Transgender Individuals ordinance.

In its current form, the proposed ordinance would require the Chicago Police Department to adopt a policy for handling transgender detainees with supervision by the city's Human Relations and Public safety committees.

Many formerly and currently homeless youth shared their experiences at the meeting. Some highlighted the issue of homelessness among LGBT youth, many of whom were turned away from their homes when they came out.

There are nearly 2,000 homeless youths in Cook County, of which 20-40 percent self-identify as LGBT, according to a University of Illinois at Chicago survey.

Currently, there are approximately 200 shelter beds designated for youth in Chicago, and LAC is currently working to increase that number.

One formerly homeless youth, Cassie Sailor, highlighted the need for health care for the homeless, uninsured and underinsured.

Under current Illinois statutes, nonprofit hospitals receive tax breaks for providing free and reduced care, known as charity care, to uninsured people and others who need care but cannot afford it.

But Sailor, among many other speakers, said that these safety net hospitals were not following through with charity care.

"I fight for charity care because so many of my friends are uninsured," said Sailor.

LAC is working with the Fair Care Coalition on the state level to find a solution to gaps in charity care. Toni Preckwinkle, president of the Cook County board of commissioners, committed to put pressure on the Illinois General Assembly to

pass a standardized and streamlined charity care initiative.

"Health care is a human right. We all deserve access to health care. People who are uninsured should have the same access to health care as people who are insured," said Curtis Smith of Second Unitarian Church of Chicago.

Ald. Michele Smith committed to support an increase in the currently required 10 percent affordable units in new or rezoned housing property. She also said she would propose that the developer planning to take over the Children's Memorial Hospital site in Lincoln Park build more than the required 10 percent affordable-housing units.

Ald. James Cappleman, Scott Waguespack and Tom Tunney also expressed support for affordable housing.

"Our vision of Lincoln Park that welcomes a diversity of families is not only possible, it's going to happen," said Kathy Moore of St. Clement Church.

Members of LAC also spoke on income inequality, demanding an end to corporate tax breaks and other budget loopholes in lieu of cutting social services.

"LAC cannot and will not stand quietly by while cuts to our social services go on," said Sue Gries of Deborah's Place. "Cuts and threats to both state and federal programs are continuing."

State Sen. President John Cullerton announced the Corporate Tax Transparency Bill, legislation that he would be introducing this week in Springfield. Under the proposed legislation, a public corporation would have to make tax forms public, and if the corporation does not pay any taxes, a reason would have to be disclosed.

State Reps. Sara Feigenholtz and Ann Williams pledged to support this measure.

Congressmen Danny Davis and Mike Quigley pledged to strengthen programs of tax reform and committed to meet with members of LAC over the summer to continue to discuss these issues.

"There's nothing I like better than citizens in action," said Davis. "I commend all of the elected officials who are here today ... I absolutely support your agenda 100 percent."