

Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 75265, Washington, D.C. 20013
(202) 667-5139 • www.glaa.org

Testimony on Nominees to the D.C. Commission on Human Rights

Delivered before the Committee on Aging and Community Affairs
May 23, 2012

Good afternoon. I am Rick Rosendall, Vice President for Political Affairs of the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington. I am here to declare GLAA's support for several nominees to the District of Columbia Commission on Human Rights. I will speak only on nominees with whom we are familiar, and apologize to those we have overlooked.

We have been critical of the vacancies on the Commission and have sought the nomination of at least one transgender commissioner given the considerable discrimination faced by transgender people, who are protected under the D.C. Human Rights Act. By nominating two esteemed members of that community, Mayor Gray has demonstrated once again his commitment to making real the promise of equality.

Earline Budd (PR19-672) is a co-founder and former Executive Director of Transgender Health Empowerment, Inc. She has been a cultural sensitivity consultant for local and national organizations in working with transgender people. She has more than two decades of experience in working with special populations and HIV/AIDS. She has been a godsend to innumerable people in times of crisis, and through her work has gained a close understanding of how marginalized populations fall through the cracks of our city services and criminal justice system. She received GLAA's Distinguished Service Award in 2002.

Alexandra Andrea Beninda (PR19-682) is a dedicated transgender advocate and community volunteer. She has served as a board member for Equality Virginia, Treasurer of the Virginia Partisans Gay and Lesbian Democratic Club, Treasurer of the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club, and a board member for the DC Center for the LGBT Community. She has represented the Stein Club on the D.C. Democratic State Committee. She is an active member and Assistant Treasurer at All Souls Unitarian Church. She has received the support of ANC 3F, where she has lived since May 2010.

Ms. Budd and Ms. Beninda are the principal reasons for my presence here today; but I wish to make favorable mention of three others who are familiar to us.

Commissioner Nkechi Taifa (PR19-670) has spent her career highlighting and challenging unequal justice. She has served as legislative counsel for the ACLU Washington office; policy counsel for the Women's Legal Defense Fund; and staff attorney for the National Prison Project. She was founding director of the award-winning Equal Justice Program at the Howard University School of Law. She serves as senior policy analyst for the Open Society Policy Center, and convenes the Justice Roundtable policy network.

Commissioner Michael E. Ward (PR19-671) has done pro bono work representing parents and children in child abuse and neglect cases in D.C. Superior Court. He has also represented clients before the D.C. Court of Appeals and the Virginia Supreme Court on issues concerning gay and lesbian rights.

Rahim Jenkins (PR19-681) has spent many years working to heal the inner city, from helping ex-offenders reintegrate into the community to helping urban youth to working for peace between gangs to demanding better investigations into the murders of black women.

We commend Mayor Gray for these nominations, and urge the Council to act promptly to confirm them.

Thank you.