




MA Commission on LGBTQ Youth: Presentation for the Community Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention Commission

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AGENDA


1. History of the Commission
 2. Member composition and structure
 3. Funding and expenditures
 4. Staffing structure
 5. Questions and discussion
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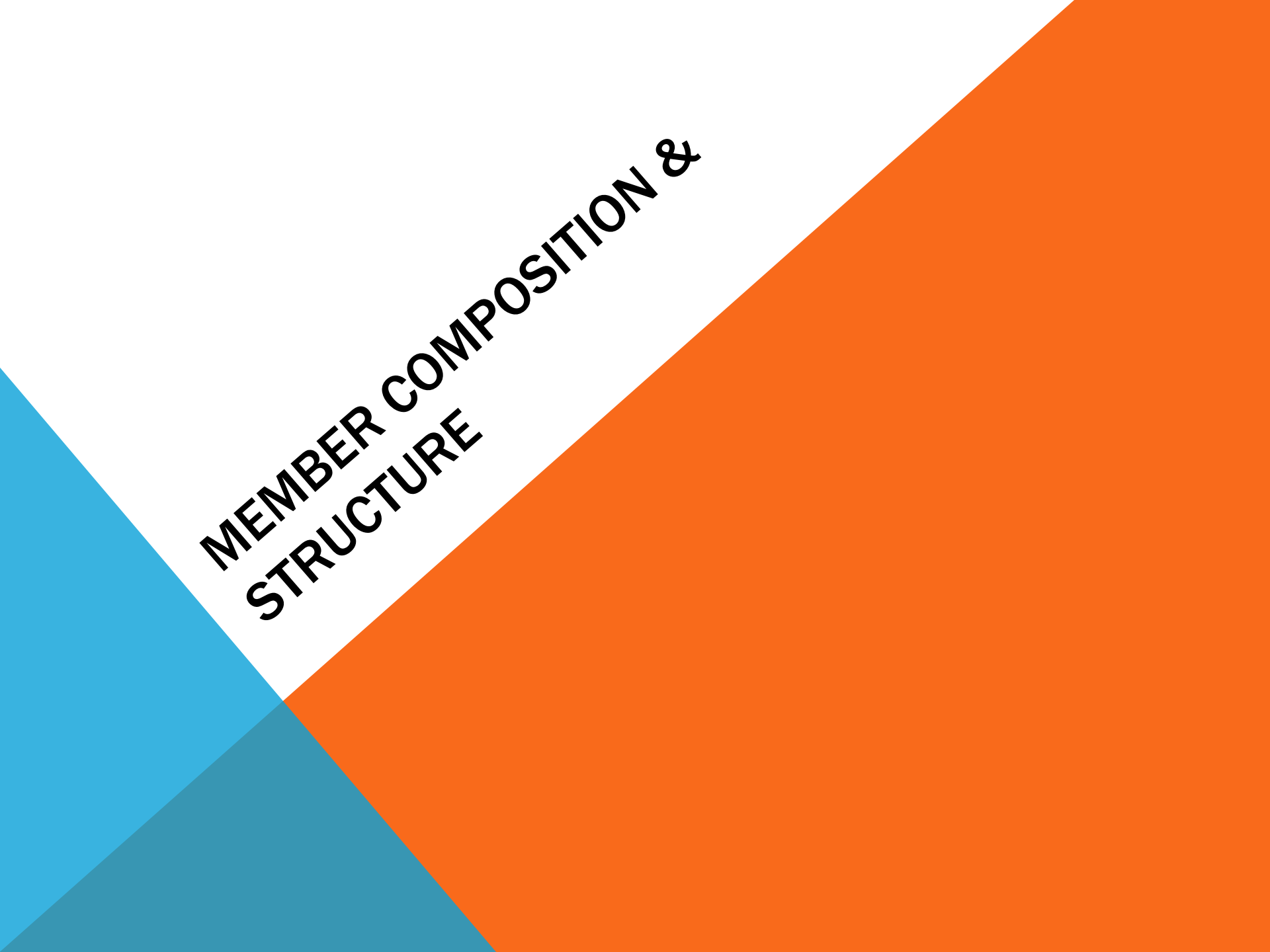
HISTORY OF THE COMMISSION

EARLY HISTORY OF THE COMMISSION

- Originally founded in 1992 as a Governor's Commission under Governor Weld to address bullying and suicide prevention
 - One year later, the Safe Schools Program was founded in close association with the Commission under the Department of Education
 - Massachusetts banned discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in schools in that same year (1993)
 - That year, Massachusetts also became the first state to add sexual orientation to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)
 - The Commission also founded Youth Pride around this time, which was the first event of its kind in the nation
 - In this way, the Commission's work was structured with a blend of legislative policy, administrative collaboration, community engagement, and data collection which largely continues today
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LATER HISTORY OF THE COMMISSION

- In 2006, Governor Romney announced plans to disband the Governor's Commission
 - The legislature decided to immediately create a legislative commission to replace the old Governor's Commission
 - The legislature created a new structure in which 27 members were appointed from professional associations, advocacy groups, and service providers (no government appointees)
 - Over the years, the Commission also added 23 elected "regional seats" to help expand and balance membership
 - What had been the Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth eventually came to the name "Massachusetts Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth"
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**MEMBER COMPOSITION &
STRUCTURE**

COMMISSION LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

- The Commission annually elects a Chair and up to three Vice Chairs
 - The Chair in turn appoints additional members to the Executive Committee, which is largely the decision-making body of the Commission
 - The Chair also appoints a Chair of the Membership Committee, which leads the elections process each year for any open regional seats, and also oversees the appointing process
 - The Chair works most closely with the staff to help oversee policy and programmatic decisions that are too small or timely to wait for Executive Committee meetings
 - In times of staff shortage, the Chair has effectively run the Commission and served as its chief spokesperson
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PREVIOUS COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

- Due to the large size of the Commission, smaller working groups have been critical to member engagement
 - For many years, the Commission had three committees to oversee its work:
 - Government relations
 - Community relations
 - Safe schools
 - This model lost its effectiveness as:
 - The desire to have interdisciplinary approaches grew
 - Funding increased, staff and consultants increased, and the committees felt they were mostly getting report-backs
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NEW TEAM STRUCTURE


- After undergoing a strategic planning review, the Commission's three committees were abolished in January
- Replaced with smaller, informal teams, such as:
 - Teams based around specific policy “focus areas” in which we engage, such as homelessness and health
 - These policy areas reflect our work around racial justice and our desire to engage in issues that are both more upstream and downstream than what happens at schools
 - Teams overseeing smaller aspects of our programmatic work, like a training team and GSA team
 - The Executive Committee and Membership Committee remain, with some changes

COMPARING MEMBERSHIPS


- Our Commission, in contrast to yours, has no government appointees and has members who mostly view this as volunteer work
 - Therefore, they have limited time and resources (e.g. staff support) to commit to this work
 - Our large size also means that staff spend a lot of time engaging and encouraging members, and crafting and monitoring projects
 - However, even members who have little time for volunteering contribute their perspectives and connections, allowing the Commission to serve as a convener
 - We also have to work to convene government representation, which could be an easier (and valuable) task for your Commission
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FUNDING & EXPENDITURES


HISTORY OF COMMISSION'S FUNDING

- Originally, as a Governor's Commission, helped to determine where funding for LGBTQ youth services should be directed
 - Commission later gave up this role because of difficulty navigating members' organizational affiliations
 - Commission was later funded as an independent commission; high point in funding was approximately \$1 million
 - Both the Commission and the Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students, then still a program of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), saw funding decline (almost?) to zero
 - Commission relied on some funding from the Department of Public Health (\$35,150) as well as their in-kind contributions
 - The Commission also had a (now defunct) "Friends of the Commission" nonprofit to receive donations
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COMMISSION'S FUNDING TODAY


- After the Safe Schools Program had lost its funding at DESE, the Commission worked with the legislature to add funding to its budget to address the needs of LGBTQ youth
 - This began about six years ago, and allowed the Commission to bring back the Safe Schools Program directly under its leadership
 - The Commission has been level funded now at \$500,000 for several years, which together with the funding from DPH equals a total annual budget of \$535,150
 - Budget was previously set largely by committees and the individual projects they pursued, and heavily influenced by consultant planning
 - Today, it is mostly staff-driven with input from Commission leadership
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EXPENDITURE OF COMMISSION FUNDS


- Staff and consultants make up the bulk of the Commission's expenditures
 - More than half can roughly be associated with programming, with the rest being more associated with policy work
 - In accordance with the Commission's budget line and DPH allocation, its funding goes to improving school climate and youth health
 - However, the Commission's strategic planning work over the years, and its focus on racial equity, has led this to be more holistically approached over time
 - Funding allows the Commission's services to be offered for free to schools, with virtually all appropriate requests met
 - However, our structure and funding level limits outreach to bring services to more schools
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STAFFING STRUCTURE

HISTORY OF COMMISSION STAFFING

- During funding shortfalls, the Commission went without staff
 - Consultant positions were used to cover what duties the Commission could afford
 - Slowly, as funding increased and leveled, the Commission was able to add back in staff positions
 - This began with an administrative assistant, later coordinator, who organized the Commission's work
 - Another position was added to coordinate the work of the Safe Schools Program in particular
 - The position of Director was only added two years ago, after several years without such a position (during which time Chair largely fulfilled this role)
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COMMISSION STAFFING TODAY

- The Commission has continued to reorganize since hiring a director, to better integrate its work and focus more responsibilities with staff versus consultants
 - Currently has a director, policy coordinator, administrative assistant, and full-time outreach intern
 - All staff are employees of JRI, the Commission's longtime fiscal agent
 - Consultants continue to do much of the Commission's programmatic, on-the-ground work, owing to the benefit of flexibility in these positions
 - Nature of funding process through Administration and Finance and DPH nevertheless poses some challenges, especially around staffing
 - These challenges also limit ability to replace more consultant roles with staff positions
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QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

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