

December 5, 2001

Supervisor Michael Antonovich
Los Angeles County Supervisor, 5th District
869 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, Ca. 90012

Dear Supervisor Antonovich;

This letter is in regards to a concern I have with the lack of a commission for men in Los Angeles County. The reason being is that the needs of male victims of domestic violence in Los Angeles County are not being addressed. Women's commissions continually address supporting female victims of domestic violence yet male victims are not being represented in *any* area of domestic violence.

As a domestic violence advocate/liaison that has served with three captains within the LAPD Harbor Division over the years and as the previous Domestic Abuse Response Team Coordinator with Long Beach Police Department/WomenShelter of Long Beach, it has been very difficult to say the least to provide emergency shelter for men in domestic violence relationships. The only shelter for us to transport male victims in Los Angeles County has been Valley Oasis, which is located in Lancaster, over a 2 hour drive from Los Angeles. Many times it has been necessary for my staff to offer hotel vouchers to male victims until arrangements can be made to transport the victims the following day. The vouchers do not provide the safety and the emergency counseling that is imperative for victims within the first 24 hours of a 911 Domestic Violence call. With the increasing abuse cases, that is finally being reported by males victimized by their female partners, the county has to address the issue of shelters for male victims.

This leads me to my next point. Why are there no domestic violence shelters that provide safety, education and counseling for the gay community? Why has this community been ignored? The need is just as great. What is the message that we are sending to the gay community? Is it that they are not valued members of the community and that abuse will be tolerated?

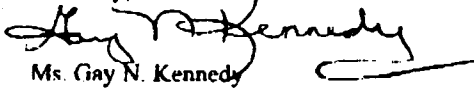
Unless you have been a first responder to a 911 call-out that involves a gay couple, you cannot comprehend how difficult it is to tell a gay man that there is nothing we can do except provide him with a hotel voucher. In addition, we have to tell them that there "might" be room for him the following day at Valley Oasis and we "may" be able to provide transportation "if" there is staff available. We cannot offer him safety, shelter, counseling or the reassurance that his life is important. I would also like to add that the majority of shelters throughout the county don't even provide hotel vouchers to males or gay men.

As a domestic violence guest speaker at numerous workshops and conferences, I have been asked "Are there shelters for men that are abused?" The complaints I hear from the police officers are that they don't have time nor do they want to transport male victims to Lancaster after a 911 call.

Evidence shows that without a men's commission in Los Angeles County, domestic violence will not be addressed concerning male victims. Domestic violence is *not* just a women's issue.

I would deeply appreciate having you address my concerns of implementing a men's commission which will address providing male shelters within Los Angeles County. If you have any question, please don't hesitate to call me at: (310) 830-7600 ext. 1823.

Sincerely,


Ms. Gay N. Kennedy
Domestic Violence Advocate / Facilitator

Cc: Los Angeles Count Supervisors