FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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***PRESS RELEASE***

THE SAN FRANCISCO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AND DEPARTMENT OF AGING AND ADULT SERVICES ANNOUNCE RESULTS OF RECENT SURVEY ON AGING IN THE CITY'S LGBT COMMUNITY-FINDINGS REVEAL HIGH LEVEL OF SENIORS LIVING IN ISOLATION

(San Francisco, CA) A new survey of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender seniors in San Francisco reveals high percentages living in isolation.

Over 600 San Francisco seniors (60 and above) responded to a survey sponsored by the City's Department of Aging and Adult Services and supported by the Human Rights Commission, and conducted by noted University of Washington professor and researcher, Dr. Karen Fredrickson-Goldsen.

Survey results will be released on Tuesday, July 9th at 3 PM at the Koret Auditorium in the Main Library. This meeting is open to the public.

Striking in the results was the fact that survey participants were dramatically more likely to live alone than are San Francisco's total senior population. Furthermore, most participants indicated that they did not have children or that their children were not available to provide help. Fewer than one in ten indicated that they had planned for informal caregiving arrangements. It is estimated that there are 20,000 LGBT seniors living in San Francisco and that number is expected to rise significantly as the baby boom generation ages.

Karen Fredrickson-Goldsen, the survey's lead researcher at the University of Washington, said "The fact that so many LGBT seniors live alone and do not have family support as they age creates an atypical picture of aging in America. In addition, many survey respondents report experiences of discrimination based on their LGBT status or gender identity, thus creating a layer of separation and distrust of some programs designed to help the elderly."

San Francisco Mayor Edwin M. Lee stated "This first of its kind survey will help San Francisco understand the needs of this rapidly growing segment in our City's population," said Mayor Ed Lee. "The survey will allow us to consider facts and data as we create policies to help LGBT seniors, and we are looking forward to the recommendations of the LGBT Senior Policy Task Force early next year."

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The survey was conducted under the direction of the LGBT Aging Policy Task Force, created by Supervisors Scott Weiner and David Campos and unanimously endorsed by the entire Board of Supervisors. The Task Force was charged with making actionable recommendations to the Supervisors.

Task Force Chairman, Bill Ambrunn said "Without data to inform public policy decisions, the Task Force couldn't do its job properly. This survey opens another closet door and finally lets San Francisco's LGBT seniors into the light."

Diana Jensen, a planning analyst with the Human Service Agency commented, "This survey is an important step toward understanding the diverse experiences of LGBT older adults in San Francisco."

Perry Lang, a member of the Task Force and Executive Director of the Black Coalition on AIDS, said "It is critical that we document the growing needs of the diverse LGBT population. I am especially proud of the Black LGBT residents who participated in the survey added their concerns to the chorus of voices who have spoken out about isolation, frailty, and marginalization." He noted "The survey outreach was a collaborative effort and I was proud to be a part of it."

Jorge Rodriguez, a senior and member of the Task Force, said "I was real proud of the great number of Gay Latino participants in our survey. This great effort would not have been possible without the help of all the agencies that work with the LGBT Latino community in San Francisco. These agencies facilitated my getting the message out through client presentations and telephone calls. I was also able to call upon my personal contacts and former colleagues. The Tom Wadell Clinic stands out where the staff let us interview transgender folks in the waiting room. The staff couldn't have been more helpful. I am honored to work alongside such a fantastic group of professionals."

Significant findings include:

- Transgender Seniors face many challenges, rising to the level of crisis in a variety of ways including personal safety, treatment at some service providers.

- 15% of seniors responding to the survey reported that they had seriously considered suicide in the last 12 month.

- Despite all the advances of the LGBT community in San Francisco and the general openness to diversity, nearly half of LGBT older adult participants still report that within the last 12 months they have been subjected to discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

- More than 40% have one or more physical disabilities.

Over 600 individuals took the survey making it one of the most demographically diverse samples to date on LGBT aging. While major efforts were made to encourage ethnic and racial minorities to participate, it proved very difficult to secure their participation in large numbers.
The same proved true for the homeless population bisexuals and transgender adults. This reinforces the survey finding theme of isolation, and suggests that further efforts may be necessary to meet the needs of the diverse community.

The next steps for the Task Force include reviewing the survey results, conducting several focus groups and public meetings in order to make specific, concrete recommendations to the Board of Supervisors early next year.

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