

Somerset County LGBTQ+ Advisory Board

On Monday, September 27, at 8:30pm, the Advisory Board held an emergency meeting & unanimously approved this letter to be sent.



Mayor Matthew Moench
Township Council
Bridgewater Municipal Building
100 Commons Way
Bridgewater, NJ 08807

September 28, 2021

Dear Mayor Moench and the Bridgewater Township Council Members,

We are the members of the Somerset County LGBTQ+ Advisory Board. The Board was established in 2020 by the County Commissioners to serve Somerset County. Our mission is to help make Somerset County the most inclusive and welcoming place in the State, if not the Country. These are lofty ambitions, and we have had over a year of successful programming so far. Our duties include listening to our citizens and advising the different entities of the county on how to be more inclusive and how to help those who live in this county feel safe in their homes.

It has come to our attention that one of your appointees to the Municipal Alliance for Preventing Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, Jeff Danco, has a history of supporting, and practicing on his clients, gay-to-straight conversion therapy. In 2013 the New Jersey Legislature passed a bill banning the practice of conversion therapy and then-Governor Christie signed it into law. The law was challenged, and the United States Supreme Court rejected the case, signaling that the law is constitutional.

A quick Google search of his name reveals his outdated and unaccepted views on conversion therapy. In an attached article published in the Star Ledger in 2012, and updated in 2019, Danco spoke against the at-the-time soon to be proposed law banning gay conversion therapy as it is harmful to the victims that are subjected to the barbaric practice. It is most harmful to children, and Danco has admitted that, prior to the law banning such practices being passed in 2013, that he has performed such actions on teenagers. He has been noted as telling his clients that they can change homosexuality "like any other sense of inadequacy or inferiority."

We do not need to tell you that those views are offensive and wrong- that is obvious. We are writing to you today to urge you to immediately replace Danco on the Municipal Alliance. He has no place speaking to children or representing any entity of Somerset County. According to a September 2020

survey performed by the UCLA School of Law Williams Institute, 55,000 13-17-year old's in New Jersey identify as LGBT. Someone with a history and positions like Danco should not be interacting with children, particularly in a State with such a large LGBT population among our juveniles.

We are open to speak to you further about these issues and are always available to give guidance where necessary.

Yours,

Michele Kidd, Chair

On behalf of the Somerset County LGBTQ+ Advisory Board

Frank J. Morano, Vice-Chair

Michael Poreda

Sydney Rosen

Roberta Walters

Jean Weeks

CC:

- Shanel Y. Robinson, Director, Somerset County Board of County Commissioners
- Commissioner Melonie Marano, Advisor, Somerset County LGBTQ+ Advisory Board
- Stephanie Billitz, Somerset County Municipal Alliance Coordinator
- Celina Levy, Executive Director, Governors Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse
- Robert Beers, Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District Superintendent
- Christian Fuscarino, Executive Director, Garden State Equality
- Michael Pappas, Bridgewater Township Administrator
- Linda Doyle, Bridgewater Township Clerk

