

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners issued a proclamation at its meeting Thursday, Oct. 6, to recognize National Coming Out Day, which is celebrated internationally each year on Oct. 11.

As part of the board's proclamation, which acknowledged coming out as a significant life experience, commissioners heard testimony from two county employees, Eric Zimmerman, a property appraiser, and Daryl Dixon, the Chief Officer of Diversity and Equity.

Capt. Zimmerman, an Iraq War veteran with the Army National Guard, spoke about the significance of the September repeal of the military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, and about the importance of being a role model to those struggling with their identities.

"I encourage any leader, any person of influence, any peer, to live as you are," Zimmerman said. "To show the people around you, who look to you for direction and guidance, to live as you are. You will make a difference in the perceptions of those historically aghast at the idea of you. You will make a difference in a young person struggling to find normality and to find identity."

Recently, Multnomah County Commissioners joined the international movement of supporting the LGBT youth community by creating an "It Gets Better" video. Commissioners spoke of the need to speak out against bullying.

"I do believe it will get better because we will work every day to make it better," said Dixon, who leads the county's efforts to ensure accountability for access, equity and inclusion in its services and practices.

National Coming Out Day is celebrated each Oct. 11 to mark the anniversary of the second March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1987. Half a million people demonstrated in the nation's capital, which resulted in the formation of a number of LGBT organizations.

For more information:

SMYRC (The Sexual & Gender Minority Resource Center)

Q Center

PFLAG (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays), Portland Chapter

Basic Rights Oregon