



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Cindi Creager

CreagerCole Communications

t: 646.279.4559

cindi@creagercole.com

TLDEF Names Melissa Sklarz Director of Development

New York, NY - Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund announces the appointment of Melissa Sklarz to the role of Director of Development. Sklarz is a highly respected and beloved political stalwart in New York who brings decades of transgender advocacy to the post. Her own inspiring personal story as an out and celebrated transgender activist in the state adds to the significance of the hire.

“We are thrilled and honored to welcome Melissa Sklarz as our new Director of Development,” said TLDEF Executive Director Jillian Weiss. “Melissa is a powerful voice in our community with a long and exemplary track record of fighting tirelessly for the rights of transgender New Yorkers. She is just the kind of leader we need to take our development to new heights at this important moment in our history, so that we may help even more trans people across the nation live happier and healthier lives through our vital advocacy work.”

Sklarz became the first transgender person elected to office in New York in 1999 when she was elected Judicial Delegate from the 66th Assembly District. She was also the first transgender person from New York to be a delegate at the Democratic National Convention in 2016, after being appointed to the Credentials Committee in 2004 and 2012, and the Rules Committee in 2008.

Sklarz was a past Board Co-Chair of the Empire State Pride Agenda (ESPA) and stood by Governor Andrew Cuomo’s side when he announced transgender legal and civil rights protections in New York State in October of 2015. She was also with Governor David Paterson when he announced civil rights protections for transgender state employees in 2009. She helped bring civil rights to transgender people in New York City in 2002, and has been one of New York’s strongest proponents of the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA) since the bill was developed.

“I am extremely grateful to take on this new role as TLDEF’s chief fundraiser,” said Sklarz. “I’ve spent a large part of my life standing up for my trans community so it seems fitting for me to take

that advocacy to the next level by working with TLDEF, an organization I've long respected, supported and admired. I am looking forward to working closely with Jillian, the Board of Directors and my fellow staff members. As we dedicate ourselves to making the world a more welcoming environment for trans and gender nonconforming people, I am excited to use my skills to help change the culture at large, and to ensure that TLDEF has the funding needed to stand and support our communities with the appropriate legal action," she said.

"And I am thrilled to be a trans person, raising funds for a trans-run organization, helping trans communities," she added.

Sklarz sat on the NYPD Commissioner's LGBT Advisory Committee, assisted the Hetrick-Martin Institute with its new transgender program for young adults, and was on the SAGE Advisory Committee for LGBT seniors. She begins as TLDEF's Director of Development today.

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About the Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund (TLDEF): TLDEF is committed to ending discrimination based upon gender identity and expression and to achieving equality for transgender people through public education, test-case litigation, direct legal services, and public policy efforts. Read more at: <http://transgenderlegal.org>.