

## EMPIRE STATE PRIDE AGENDA

### **Statement by Jacob Lieberman of the Empire State Pride Agenda on St. Vincent's Hospital at the Community Board 2 Meeting June 10, 2008, NYC**

- Good evening. My name is Jacob Lieberman and I am the Director of Pride in Action for the Empire State Pride Agenda, the New York State civil rights and advocacy organization for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (or LGBT) community. The Empire State Pride Agenda has two offices, one in Albany, and one here in the City on W. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street.
- I am here tonight to urge the Commission to approve the hardship exemption for St. Vincent's to demolish the O'Toole Building.
- St. Vincent's Hospital has been a steadfast and longtime health care provider to the LGBT community. For over twenty-five years, St. Vincent's has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to providing the highest standards of HIV care. They took care of people with AIDS when no one else would. They do so now, with the largest HIV/AIDS Center in New York State.
- Additionally, transgender New Yorkers, who still face stiff discrimination and obstacles in access to appropriate, quality health care, have found it at St. Vincent's. St. Vincent's is a partner with trans community health initiatives and hosted last year's Transgender Health Fair and was a co-sponsor again this year.
- You may know that much of St. Vincent's workforce is represented by SEIU Local 1199. 1199 has been a steadfast ally to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender New Yorkers and has been involved in the Empire State Pride Agenda's Pride In Our Union program, which I currently run among my other duties.
- Regardless of who they are or why they need care of what they can afford to pay, the people who walk into St. Vincent's deserve the best in care. St. Vincent's has always tried to provide that, but as healthcare continues to advance, St. Vincent's cannot hope to keep up in its outdated buildings.
- This mission of care is severely challenged by the aged infrastructure and composition of its current buildings. The O'Toole Building is the only site on which a modern acute care hospital and trauma center consistent with its charitable purposes can be reasonably constructed, renovation won't work, and it owns no other suitable sites. The inability to build on the O'Toole site would seriously interfere with St. Vincent's carrying out its work of caring for our community.
- Please approve the hardship application submitted by St. Vincent's. This may be one of the most important decisions that you will make.