
THOMAS AND STACEY SIEBEL FOUNDATION

February 28, 2008

Senator Ellen Corbett
State Capitol
Room 3092
Sacramento, CA 94248

Dear Senator Corbett,

As the Executive Director of the Siebel Foundation, I am writing to voice my concerns regarding AB 624, legislation affecting foundations and nonprofits in the State of California. The legislation, sponsored by Assemblyman Coto and recently passed by the Assembly, would add onerous reporting requirements for the Foundation, and would invade our personal privacy.

I have chosen a career in philanthropy in order to serve the public good. I work for a private institution whose sole purpose is to serve the needs of the public—needs ranging from alleviating the suffering of the homeless, enhancing the well-being of California's youth, addressing critical health issues, and conserving the environment.

Now, my personal privacy, as well as that of our board and the boards and staff of the organizations we support, is being threatened. What matters is not whether we—or our grantees—are gay or straight, male or female, white or black, but rather whether we are effectively performing our professional duties to serve the public.

What is more troubling to me, however, is the manner in which this legislation would alter the way the underserved are viewed—not as men or women in need, but rather as a people who are defined by their gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Further, as a practical matter, I am unsure of how we will comply with this legislation.

How are we to determine who the Red Cross serves during a wildfire or mudslide, when those in need are desperate for help? How are we to assess the ethnicity or sexual orientation of the teenagers who have been discouraged from using methamphetamine by the ads of the Meth Project—one of our most effective programs, headquartered in California. This incredibly successful program works because it is results oriented, targeting teens—irrespective of their gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation. There is a myriad of examples of ways in which this reporting requirement would not be feasible, nor desirable and where it might actually harm those who are being served.

Again, I am deeply concerned about this legislation and its invasiveness into my personal life and lives of our grantees. In addition, the focus on reporting will distract both our staff and that of our grantees from the important work of serving others.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns.

Respectfully,

Nitsa Zuppas