

Dear friends,

I delayed sending out my 2023 end of year letter because I anticipated there might be good news in early January. And there is!

Broadened mandated health insurance coverage for treatment of infertility will make it less expensive for queers to have kids

Over the last two years, as a representative for Garden State Equality, I have been working with a coalition to extend mandatory health insurance coverage for infertility.

During the lame duck session, the Legislature passed, and Governor Murphy signed the bill into law.

The new law revises the definition of infertility to include individuals and same-sex couples who cannot achieve pregnancy without assistance of the use of assisted reproductive technology. Insurance companies are required to provide coverage for infertility treatment when determined by a physician.

The new law goes into effect for health insurance policies issued after August 1. Thus, for example, if your policy is reissued each year on January 1, the new coverage will start as of January 1, 2025.

In order to gain passage, we had to agree to limit the new law's reach to policies issued to groups over 50. Thus, policies issued to individuals or in groups less than 50 will not be covered. We will start work on that expansion immediately.

Dr. Serena Chen was the catalyst who made this happen. She coaxed me to write an initial draft as we formed our working coalition. Our perennial LGBTQ+ advocate **Deb Guston** played an integral role.

Deb, Serena and I all testified before legislative committees. But what won the hearts and minds of the legislators was testimony delivered by two sets of parents who are clients.

Amelia and Rachel Fairley with their one-year-old daughter Brynlee alongside Michael and Ralph Maguire-Losanno with their one-year-old son Luca captivated the Assembly Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee. I have never seen committee members so riveted as they heard about the challenges queer people face in creating family. Luca and xxx were living proof.

Here are some other reflections on 2023.

Successes:

LGBTQ+ representation in our state government.

Luanne Peterpaul of Monmouth County was elected to the New Jersey Assembly in November. She is the first out lesbian to serve in the legislature.

Luanne joins **Don Guardian**, as Assemblyman from Atlantic County. So now there are a gay man and a lesbian among the 80 Assembly members.

In 2023, Governor Murphy appointed **Thomas Prol** Chair of the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission. Previously, Tom was the first (and only) out president of the New Jersey State Bar.

Thanks to Governor Murphy, Tom joins a growing number of LGBTQ+ high ranking members of the Murphy administration. **Shawn LaTourette** continues as the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection. **Allison Chris Myers**, who is transgender, serves as Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the New Jersey Civil Service Commission.

Time magazine top 100 mystery writers of all time.

My friend and fellow New Jersey attorney **Robyn Gigl** has written a series of books about a New Jersey transgender female criminal attorney Erin McCabe. So far, they include “By Way of Sorrow”, “Survivor’s Guilt” and “Remain Silent.”

This year Time magazine created a list of the top 100 mystery writers of all time. Along with Agatha Christie, Sir Conan Doyle, Dashiell Hammett and Stephen King, Time magazine included Robyn.

I was thrilled beyond measure for Robyn. I highly recommend her books. They all take place in the Garden State and are chock full of endearing, local references. The books are fast-paced, page turners. Robyn deals sensitively with the issues of being transgender and had me reaching for the tissue box.

Her fourth volume “Nothing But the Truth” will be published in June 2024.

Our New Jersey LGBTQ+ organizations

This year I had the honor to be appointed a Trustee of the **Garden State Equality Action Fund, Inc.**, the political arm of the state’s leading queer advocacy organization.

I always respected their work. Seeing it first hand and close up, I am impressed at their vitality, ingenuity and empathy.

So here’s a shout out to **Christian Fuscario**.

On a related note, when working with estate planning clients with charitable intent, I counsel them to remember our local New Jersey LGBTQ+ organizations.

National groups do outstanding work, but little of it is done in New Jersey. Meanwhile, our local organizations who do work on the ground here in our state are limited by shoestring budgets.

At the end of 2023, my client Alan Wilde died. He and his husband Jack Undank met in 1947 while in high school. They remained an openly gay couple for 71 years. After Jack's death, Alan reconfigured their designated beneficiaries and named Garden State Equality to receive \$520,000.

Wow! Their life story is amazing and their gift provides a meaningful legacy to the LGBTQ+ community in New Jersey.

The battle continues.

The transgender and non-binary members of our community were the subject of unrelenting attacks across the country.

New Jersey was not immune. The controversy played out in school boards across the state where school boards rescinded previously passed protections for young people dealing with their gender identity. Many school board elections this November featured stark choices between the "parental rights" crowd and supporters of students and teachers.

Fortunately, in 70% of the races our allies and advocates won. But there is still that 30% where the lives and liberty of queer kids are threatened.

Personal stuff

I get asked all the time when I am going to retire.

Here's what I know. I still have full energy and get great fulfillment from my law practice.

I want to continue to serve my clients as long as possible. Many of you my clients are also friends and part of my extended family. I want to be there for you if you need me.

That said, I am making succession plans. I am in talks with two attorneys who are capable and willing to take over my practice. I am foreseeing a gradual process over time.

When the plans solidify, I will let you all know.

Best regards,