



September 19, 2002

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Commission for Men

Dear Supervisors:

I am the Presiding Judge of Fox Television's "Divorce Court" a nationally syndicated television show featuring real cases and real litigants who are divorcing. I have served as a prosecutor for the city of Los Angeles Office of the City Attorney, and have been practicing family law in Los Angeles County for over 23 years. My practice consists of over 70% men.

Recently, while working with Assemblyman Rod Wright's office on his Paternity Justice bill, I learned that activists from the National Coalition of Free Men sent a proposal to L.A. County asking them to form a commission for men to examine how divorce, custody, mental health, gender roles, reproductive issues and other issues affect men, and that Assemblyman Wright and other community members have written letters supporting the proposal. I offer my support for the establishing of a Los Angeles County Commission for men as well.

There is no doubt that men have important issues that are not addressed enough by society. Fraud is one example. Thousands of men every year are misidentified as the father of a child and never know about it until years later, when it's too late. Then they're locked in financial prison and forced to pay child support when DNA paternity excludes them as the father. Countless men and their families have been victimized and devastated by this very serious social problem. I have met and represented many of them myself.

Of course, there are many other issues men face. They are often denied custody and visitation awards, or treated with shame and skepticism when victimized by domestic violence. These problems often stem from outdated stereotypes about their roles as males.

A Commission for Men could help raise public awareness about these issues.

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just as our Commissions for Women have helped raise the issues of domestic violence and the poor collection of child support for women.

Men are often hindered and reluctant to organize around their issues. However, the lack of attention to their issues is becoming costly to society, as many of their issues are directly linked to the disproportionately high rate of homelessness, suicide, dropouts and incarcerations, among men.

Ironically, many of us blame men for not organizing, but then when they do, we ignore them. Isn't it time we listen to them?

I hope you will take the important step of forming a Commission for Men so that we can bring not only men but also their issues into the gender forum. Ultimately, men, women and children will benefit.

Sincerely,



Judge Mablean Ephriam

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