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Bet Tzedek Selected to Provide Legal Services to the Transgender Community of Los Angeles as part of Newly Launched *Communities Against Hate* National Initiative

LOS ANGELES (March 13, 2017) Bet Tzedek, one of the nation's premiere public interest law firms, has been selected to provide free legal services to transgender individuals in Los Angeles seeking free legal counsel to protect themselves from hate as part of the *Communities Against Hate* national initiative.

The initiative is designed to address the disturbing spike in hate incidents across the United States and was launched today by The Leadership Conference Education Fund, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and nine additional partner organizations. It is funded by the Open Society Foundation (www.opensocietyfoundations.org). Even something as simple as legally changing a name can help reduce harassment and violence against transgender individuals; at a recent Bet Tzedek clinic, one client shared: "Having a name change, I won't be afraid to say my name anymore."

The National Center for Transgender Equality, Human Rights Campaign and other advocacy groups have all noted that the pervasive lack of gender-congruent identity documents among transgender individuals puts them at heightened risk for hate. More than two-thirds (68%) of transgender individuals have no form of ID with the name and gender marker that matches their gender identity. Of those, nearly a third (32%) have been harassed, asked to leave the premises, denied services, or assaulted when presenting ID with a name or gender that does not match the gender in which they present. Under the Trump administration, there is growing evidence that recently enacted policies to protect the transgender community will be reversed. There has been an increasing number of hate incidents targeting the LGBT community since the election, including the February 9, 2017 vandalizing of the LA LGBT Center in Hollywood with the words "F**k Trannies" and other homophobic and transphobic slurs.

To reduce and prevent incidents of hate, funding from the Open Society Foundation/*Communities Against Hate* Initiative will enable Bet Tzedek to provide free legal name and gender marker change clinics to transgender individuals throughout the Los Angeles region. Additionally, Bet Tzedek will provide transgender sensitivity training to pro bono attorneys and volunteers. Bet Tzedek has hosted six clinics since November, serving over 150 clients and training over 75 volunteers and pro bono attorneys.

According to Jordan Aiken, staff attorney for Bet Tzedek’s Transgender Medical Legal Partnership program, “Our clients often express how dysphoric and dangerous it can be to have identity documents that do not match their gender identity. Traveling, being carded, getting pulled over, even checking in for a doctor’s appointment can be very scary experiences.”

“It seems appropriate that Bet Tzedek, an organization founded to protect the rights and dignity of Holocaust survivors should be working to protect the rights and dignity of transgender people. We are proud to be a part *Communities Against Hate*. Never again, must mean never again for all people,” said Jessie Kornberg, President and CEO of Bet Tzedek.

The next scheduled clinic will take place at the Bet Tzedek offices at 3250 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90010 on March 28, 2017 from 5- 7 pm. Individuals interested in attending must pre-register by emailing Jordan Aiken at jaiken@bettzedek.org or calling 323-549-5894.

To protect the safety and security of our clients, members of the press that are interested in covering must first contact Allison Lee, Vice President, External Affairs at alee@bettzedek.org or by calling 323-549-5813.

About Bet Tzedek

Founded in 1974, Bet Tzedek pursues equal justice for all by providing high-quality, free legal services to low-income people of all racial and religious backgrounds, with a focus on seniors and people with disabilities. One of the nation’s premier public interest law firms, Bet Tzedek uses direct legal service, impact litigation, community outreach, and legislative advocacy in the areas of consumer rights, employment rights, elder justice/caregiver law, Holocaust reparations, housing, human trafficking, public benefits and real estate to serve more than 20,000 people every year. Learn more at www.bettzedek.org

About *Communities Against Hate*

Communities Against Hate is a national initiative to collect data and respond to incidents of violence, threats, and property damage motivated by hate across the United States. The initiative leverages a reporting database that aggregates reports from both victims, witnesses and new accounts of hate incidents, as well as offers legal resources and social services to support people in need. *Communities Against Hate* aims to aggregate data on hate incidents, providing legal and social support, raising awareness, and educating the public on the prevalence of hate. Learn more at www.CommunitiesAgainstHate.org

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