Pennsylvania Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine Tapped To Become First Openly Transgender Federal Official

"I look forward to the opportunity to continue to serve Pennsylvanians, and all Americans, as part of the Biden Administration if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed to this position," Levine said in a statement. By Royce Jones January 19, 2021 at 8:05 pm

HARRISBURG (KDKA) – Tuesday, President-Elect Joe Biden selected Pennsylvania Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine to become assistant secretary of health for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The incoming administration selected Dr. Levine because of her role in leading the state through the coronavirus pandemic, expertise the president-elect hopes she will bring to Washington.

Meanwhile, people like Cora Brna, a transgender woman, hopes this new voice will open new discussions about addressing the medical needs of those who have been historically unheard and underserved.

“She’s a smart lady. She’s graceful. She’s poised. She can do this,” said Brna.

Being transgender and having experienced both verbal and physical assault, Brna sometimes feels fearful.

“I’m often afraid to even leave the city sometimes because it gets a little tougher outside the city,” said Brna.

But Tuesday, she said, “I got this text on my phone and I pulled over and I read it four times. I was like, ‘This isn’t true. ’It’s true!’”

Her fear turned into empowerment when the news broke that Dr. Levine was tapped to become the first openly transgender federal official if confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

Marty Healy, Board President of Persad Center, the nation’s second-oldest LGBTQ mental health agency located in Pittsburgh, told KDKA he believes this historic moment will have monumental impact on the trans community.

“I think from a trauma perspective for our trans community, it starts to alleviate some of that,” said Healy.

If she’s confirmed, Dr. Levine will help lead the country’s coronavirus response.

When things settle down, supporters hope Dr. Levine uses her voice to address health care disparities in the trans and minority communities.

“It’s an important role to have that empathetic ear up there,” said Brna.

The Pennsylvania Health Secretary released the following statement Tuesday:

“It has truly been an honor to serve the people of Pennsylvania under the leadership of Governor Tom Wolf. He is a tremendous leader with an incredible vision for Pennsylvania, and it has been a highlight of my career to serve in his administration.
“Since I began state service in 2015, I have been laser focused on building a healthy Pennsylvania for all and I am proud of the work we have done at the Department of Health during my tenure.

“Our work on addressing the opioid epidemic has saved lives and developed innovative models to get people into treatment and into recovery.

“I am proud of the work we have done to fight diseases such as HIV and Hep C, as well as preventing diseases through our childhood immunization programs.

“I am proud of the work we have done as an administration to address health equity, and the work I have done personally to raise awareness about LGBTQ equity issues.

“And I am extremely proud of the work we have done during the last year to save lives in the face of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

“I look forward to the opportunity to continue to serve Pennsylvanians, and all Americans, as part of the Biden Administration if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed to this position.”

https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2021/01/19/pennsylvania-health-secretary-dr-rachel-levine-biden-administration/