

# The Boston Globe

WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 1991



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / JOHN TLUMACKI

Gay rights activist David LaFontaine addresses a news conference yesterday to support a bill creating a gay and lesbian advisory group, a proposal that is supported by Lt. Gov. Paul Cellucci (right).

## Gay advisory bill is backed

### Administration sees panel as tool to curb teen-age suicide

By M.E. Malone  
GLOBE STAFF

The Weld administration yesterday endorsed a bill that would establish a volunteer gay and lesbian advisory group to, among other things, recommend ways public schools could help prevent suicide among homosexual teen-agers.

Backers of the bill, including Lt. Gov. Paul Cellucci, acknowledged yesterday at a press conference that, given the controversy that often surrounds proposals for sex education and AIDS education in the classroom, efforts to make high school teachers, counselors and students more sensitive to the trials of gay teen-agers will likely meet with resistance.

"I know there will be barriers to overcome," Cellucci said. "But when mothers and fathers, brothers and

sisters, lose a son or a brother at a very young age, I can't think of anything worse."

Cellucci, whose invitation to address the graduating class of his Catholic high school alma mater was recently withdrawn by the Boston Archdiocese because he favors abortion rights, said he was not concerned about possible objections from Catholic church leaders or others who think that schools would be making a value judgment by discussing homosexuality with students.

"The value judgment is whether or not you support life," Cellucci said. "Human decency compels us to act."

The bill's chief sponsor, Rep. Alvin Thompson (D-Cambridge), expressed fear the bill will die on the House floor if it is connected in lawmakers' minds to efforts to educate young people about their gay peers.

The bill, given a favorable nod from the Legislature's joint Committee on Human Services and Elderly Affairs last month, would create a panel to offer recommendations to Health and Human Services Secretary David Forsberg on issues relating to the gay population in Massachusetts. Backers said yesterday that the panel would place special emphasis on the needs of gay youth.

David LaFontaine, lobbying director for the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights, said that, according to a 1989 federal study, up to 30 percent of the youths who commit suicide are homosexual.

Several speakers at the press conference discussed their own experiences in high school where routine adolescent conflicts were compounded by the isolation they felt as homosexuals.