

"Mister Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Center on Halsted on its five year anniversary of building and strengthening the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in Chicago.

"On June 1, 2007, I was proud to join residents from my district and across Illinois on the corner of Halsted and Waveland as Chicago's first permanent LGBT community center opened its doors.

"Since that time, Center on Halsted has become the Midwest's largest LGBT community center and a model for similar organizations across our nation.

"Patrons of all ages, backgrounds and economic status participate in the wide assortment of public programs and social services offered at the Center.

"Its youth program provides leadership training and professional development to more than 1,800 young people across Chicago.

"Social service programs include rapid HIV testing, group and individual psychotherapy, legal help, job training and the Anti-Violence Project advocating for victims of hate crimes and domestic violence.

"Under the leadership of CEO Modesto Tico Valle and the great efforts of so many people, Center on Halsted has grown into the phenomenal organization that it is today, welcoming the LGBT community and making our entire community a better place."