

# LGBTQ Equality

**February 14, 2020**

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We remain in the midst of a long fight for equality. To this day, far too many are still subjected to discrimination because of who they are or who they love. From the Stonewall Riots to the AIDS crisis, grassroots LGBTQ activists have fought for recognition as equal citizens under the law. These efforts have led to remarkable strides toward equality, including the Supreme Court's decision in 2015 to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide. We must celebrate this progress, but as we do so, we must directly confront that the work is not finished.

The Trump administration has moved decisively to rob the LGBTQ community of civil liberties, treating them as second-class citizens. In more than 30 states, individuals can still be denied housing and other basic services, refused bathroom access, or fired from their jobs because of their identity — because there is still no federal law that explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender or sexual orientation. President Trump has issued executive orders to bar the same-sex partners of diplomats from receiving U.S. visas and to stigmatize the trans community by barring them from military service. Vice President Mike Pence has a life long record of supporting organizations working everyday to demonize the LGBTQ community and has advocated for dangerous and discredited conversion therapy. These actions fit a pattern well: we know the Trump Administration constantly capitalizes on and exacerbates hate.

It is time for a president who will embrace and represent the vibrancy and diversity of the whole LGBTQ community — including LGBTQ youth, queer people of color, transgender folks, and intersex individuals — and defend equal justice under the law for every American.

Hand-in-hand with those who have been fighting for equality for decades, we must work hard to ensure that LGBTQ individuals have equal rights and cannot be discriminated against in the workplace, at the doctor's office, in school, in search of support services and public accommodations, in tax policy, in the criminal justice system, and in building loving families.

This approach will ensure that each policy is approached through a justice-oriented lens that will consider race, socioeconomic status, and other factors that influence available opportunities. We must look holistically at our policies and their implementation because protecting people from hate, from discrimination, and from denial of their basic human rights is not "special treatment," it is America finally living up to our constitutional responsibilities and our responsibilities as fellow human beings.

Here is how we begin:

We end legalized discrimination of the LGBTQ Community by:

- **Passing the Equality Act.** Currently stalled on Mitch McConnell's desk, the Equality Act would extend Federal civil rights protections for housing, employment, jury service, credit, public accommodations to all, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.
- **Passing the Do No Harm Act** to reform the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). For too long, RFRA has pitted the religious liberty of one person against the civil liberties of another.
- **Reversing President Trump's discriminatory executive orders** banning transgender individuals from serving in the military and barring the unmarried same-sex partners of diplomats posted in the U.S. from receiving visas.
- **Providing a non-binary gender marker option** on all Federal IDs and government forms.

We enforce and defend against violence and hate by:

- **Appointing judges to the court system who will advance equality** and protect LGBTQ civil rights.
- **Fighting state laws that curtail civil liberties** including laws that bar LGBTQ individuals from equal access to government services, housing, employment, education, or healthcare.
- **Directing law enforcement to investigate and enforce against hate crimes** targeted at the LGBTQ community. From the deaths of more than 100 transgender individuals in the past five years — too often trans women of color — to the mass shooting at the Pulse Nightclub to ferocious bullying of LGBTQ youth, there is an escalating crisis of violence against the community that must be stopped.
- **Resourcing crisis centers and community programs to provide shelter and resources** for LGBTQ individuals facing violence and persecution, including providing for increased capacity for local organizations through the New National Public Service Plan.
- **Expanding asylum options for LGBTQ individuals from other nations** seeking a safe haven from violence and persecution to provide a safe harbor for those in danger at home.
- **Passing the Violence Against Women Act.** VAWA must be renewed as it provides key protections for victims of domestic crimes by providing access to policing, crisis centers, shelters, housing, legal aid, hotlines and counseling, education programs

and support groups. VAWA ensures that access to these resources is not based upon sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or transgender status.

We ensure every American has equal access to the services they need and an equal opportunity to thrive by:

- **Directing the Department of Justice to enforce non-discrimination** in employment, housing, government benefits, and society on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation.
- **Providing federal poverty accommodations in equal measure to their need** to the LGBTQ community, who are more likely than their straight peers to live below the poverty line.
- **Fighting homelessness by providing LGBTQ-affirming affordable housing** opportunities through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), especially for transgender individuals and youth. Programs should be HIV/AIDS inclusive and take into consideration intersectional factors such as race and socioeconomic status.
- **Providing dignified and community affirming elder-care for aging LGBTQ individuals** through HUD programs that provide housing and assisted living facilities for LGBTQ older adults who too often lack family support networks to take care of them since they might be cast out by their families or unable to have children.
- **Enforcing the Equal Access Rule** to allow transgender shelter-seekers to be accommodated in federally-funded homeless shelters according to their gender identity and providing specialized services to the transgender community, particularly trans youth, as they experience all too high rates of homelessness.
- **Supporting the creation of loving families** by barring charities that receive taxpayer funds from denying or discriminating the adoption or foster care applications from LGBTQ individuals and couples wishing to create a family.
- **Ensuring non-discrimination and safety for LGBTQ individuals within the criminal justice system.** In particular, incarcerating transgender individuals in prison placements that prioritize their safety and correspond to their gender identity.

We protect LGBTQ youth and give them every chance for a bright future by:

- **Passing a nationwide ban of conversion therapy for youth.** Today, thirty-five states have yet to ban abusive and discredited conversion therapy. These programs stigmatizes LGBTQ youth and can lead to depression, homelessness, suicide, and other detrimental consequences. No young person should have to go through that.

- **Supporting LGBTQ youth in public education** from discrimination and bullying, including banning states from permitting schools groups to discriminate against LGBTQ students for religious reasons.

We defend the right to affordable, high-quality, non-discriminatory healthcare for every person by:

- **Guaranteeing the Right to Healthcare as one of the Five Rights for all**, without bias or discrimination due to sexual orientation or gender identity. Reversing the Trump Administration's actions to weaken and reverse the protections within Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act.
- **Ensuring that transgender individuals receive the affordable medical care they need.** Insurance plans, including the public option, private plans, Medicaid, and Medicare, should include coverage for hormone treatments and gender reassignment surgery when prescribed to a patient by their doctor.
- **Barring states from banning gender affirming surgery** as a part of healthcare.
- **Reversing the FDA ban to allow gay and bisexual men to donate blood.** The current ban is a relic of a past era of fear, no longer based upon the best available science, and furthers the stigma against the gay and bisexual community.
- **Ensuring that PReP is covered** by all healthcare plans and that all individuals have access to the HIV/AIDS care they need.
- **Resourcing the CDC and NIH to study and research the healthcare needs and solutions** tailored to the LGBTQ community including robust data collection and ensuring that the medical community has core competencies around community healthcare.

We further representation to ensure that all voices have the chance to be heard and all people fully seen by:

- **Empowering the White House Office of Public Engagement** to foster connections with the LGBTQ community and grassroots activists to ensure that the best ideas and practices reach decision-makers and that all communities are seen, valued and respected by their government.
- **Funding and supporting LGBTQ artists, creatives and community organizations** through the National Endowment for the Arts and our New National Public Service Plan.