

July 15, 2023

The undersigned LGBTQ centers and organizations write to express our strong support for the Equality Act (S. 5 in the Senate and HR. 15 in the House).

The Equality Act is a landmark nondiscrimination and civil rights bill that would update existing federal laws to protect people from discrimination based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. It has broad and deep support across lines of political party, demographics, and geography.

LGBTQ community centers collectively serve over 51,800 people each week, or nearly 2.7 million people per year. They also refer nearly 6,000 individuals per week, or roughly 312,000 people per year, to other agencies or providers, such as LGBTQ-friendly medical providers, lawyers, or businesses.¹ During this time when there is a massive and unprecedented attack on LGBTQ rights, the need for these services has never been greater.

LGBTQ individuals still experience discrimination in all areas of life including employment, housing, education, and public accommodations. Opponents of LGBTQ equality continue to file discriminatory bills in states across the country in an attempt to undermine existing nondiscrimination protections. This year, we have experienced the largest wave of anti-LGBTQ legislation in recent history. State lawmakers proposed a record 550+ bills during the 2023 legislative session that would limit the rights of LGBTQ people, with three in four of those bills targeting transgender people.

Millions of LGBTQ people live in states without laws that protect them from discrimination. The current patchwork of nondiscrimination laws in states across the country and existing gaps in federal civil rights laws leave millions of LGBTQ people vulnerable to being evicted from their homes, kicked out of a business that is open to the public, denied health care, removed from a jury, or denied government services simply because of who they are.

According to a survey by the Center for American Progress in conjunction with the independent and nonpartisan research group NORC at the University of Chicago conducted in 2022, LGBTQ individuals continue to experience significantly higher rates of discrimination than non-LGBTQ individuals, a trend that holds true in virtually every setting surveyed—including health care, employment, housing, and public spaces. Such discrimination has substantial adverse effects on

¹ <https://www.lgbtmap.org/policy-and-issue-analysis/2022-lgbtq-community-center-survey-report>

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CenterLink: The Community of LGBTQ Centers