



Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund
Working for Transgender Equal Rights

New National Campaign Advocating for Urgent Passage of the Equality Act Launches With Support from Hundreds of Nation's Top Leaders in Civil Rights, Faith, Education, Health Care, and Advocacy

The Freedom & Opportunity For All Campaign Will Continue Growing Nationwide Support for Federal Anti-Discrimination Protections for LGBTQ People, Women, People of Color, and People of All Faiths

FREEDOM & OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

(WASHINGTON, D.C. — March 23, 2021) Today, a new national campaign advocating for urgent passage of the Equality Act launched with support from [hundreds](#) of the nation's top leaders in civil rights, faith, education, health care, and advocacy. The [Freedom & Opportunity For All](#) campaign will continue growing the nationwide effort (already supported by hundreds of the nation's top [business leaders](#)) advocating for the Equality Act — historic federal legislation that would modernize and improve our nation's civil rights laws by including explicit, permanent protections for LGBTQ people, as well as women, people of color, and people of all faiths. The Equality Act passed the House with bipartisan support last month and had its first-ever hearing in the Senate last week.

The campaign — launching with an initial investment of \$4 million that will grow to eight figures as the campaign continues beyond the launch and initial phases — will collaborate closely with [hundreds of supporting organizations](#) to harness the grassroots energy of millions of members across the country. With the support of these organizations, the campaign will work to grow support for the Equality Act, educate Americans on the urgent need for the Equality Act, and engage and mobilize supporters to take action and reach out to their lawmakers. The campaign will do this through a mix of activities including legislative advocacy and lobbying, building and implementing national advertising campaigns, and executing traditional communications tactics and social media campaigns.

Broad, Overwhelming Support for the Equality Act

Freedom & Opportunity For All — co-founded and led by [16 of the nation's leading advocates](#) for equality — reflects the broad and overwhelming support for the Equality Act mirrored in communities across the country, and its announcement comes on the heels of [new polling](#) from Hart Research Associates finding that 70 percent of Americans (including 50 percent of Republicans) support the Equality Act.

To date, a majority of Americans, hundreds of members of Congress, hundreds of advocacy organizations, and more than 60 business associations — including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers — have endorsed the Equality Act. [Nearly 400 major U.S. companies](#) — including dozens of Fortune 500 companies such as Coca-Cola, Apple, General Mills, Johnson & Johnson, and Kellogg — have endorsed the Equality Act because they believe it is good for their employees and their businesses. Collectively, these companies have headquarters based in 33 states overseeing operations in all 50 states, and generate a collective revenue of \$6.5 trillion. In total, these companies employ more than 13.5 million people across the United States.

[Freedom & Opportunity For All](#) is co-founded and led by 16 of the nation's leading advocates for equality, including Center for American Progress, Equality Federation, Freedom for All Americans, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders, GLSEN, Human Rights Campaign, Lambda Legal, National Black Justice Coalition, National Center for Lesbian Rights, National Center for Transgender Equality, National LGBTQ Task Force, National Women's Law Center, PFLAG National, SAGE, Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund, and The Trevor Project.

The full list of organizations supporting the Equality Act can be found [here](#). Below are quotes from the 16 co-founding organizations of Freedom & Opportunity For All.

Andy Marra, Executive Director, Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund (TLDEF):

"TLDEF is proud to be a founding member of the Freedom & Opportunity For All coalition. For too long, transgender people have experienced discrimination in every aspect of life. The Equality Act will finally provide protections for LGBTQ people nationwide and bring us one enormous step closer towards full legal and lived equality for transgender people. The moment to pass the bill is now, and we are honored to work alongside a bipartisan group of people of faith, business leaders, and civil rights partners to get the job done."

Winnie Stachelberg, Executive Vice President, External Affairs, Center for American Progress:

"We stand at the precipice of history for the LGBTQ community. The Equality Act will finally enshrine into law the fundamental and uncontroversial principles of fairness and dignity for all people, and our coalition is committed to seeing it passed. An overwhelming majority of the American people – as well as lawmakers from both parties, the Biden administration, faith leaders, and corporate giants – support the Equality Act because they recognize that LGBTQ people deserve to be treated fairly and with respect by their employers, health care providers, educators, and civil servants. We stand united to work with the U.S. Senate to fulfill its obligation to the American people to support and defend the rights of everyone equally."

Fran Hutchins, Executive Director, Equality Federation:

"For far too long, LGBTQ people across this country have been denied basic protections from discrimination simply based on what state or zip code they call home. The Equality Act is much-needed legislation that will ensure a more just and equal America for all of us. That is why Equality Federation is proud to be a founding member of the Freedom & Opportunity For All coalition, formed with the purpose of advocating for swift passage of these needed protections. From California to New York to Alaska to Florida, there is a groundswell of people in state and local communities calling on lawmakers to pass this legislation as soon as possible. We commit to ensuring the public's demand for passage is heard all across the country."

Kasey Suffredini, CEO and National Campaign Director, Freedom for All Americans:

"For the first time in nearly 50 years of trying, our nation is poised to ensure our LGBTQ friends, family members, and neighbors are treated with dignity and respect no matter who they are, who they love, or where they live. Majorities of Americans in every state and of every demographic and political ideology support federal LGBTQ nondiscrimination protections, as do hundreds of faith leaders and our nation's most recognizable corporate brands. America is ready for Congress to pass the Equality Act, and Freedom for All Americans is proud to be working to make the people's will a reality as a founding member of Freedom & Opportunity For All."

Janson Wu, Executive Director, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders:

"This is the moment to pass the Equality Act. Every day we hear the stories of individuals from communities across the country who continue to face discrimination and harassment. Our federal nondiscrimination laws are in place to advance fairness for everyone, and the overwhelming majority of Americans agree it is past time to ensure LGBTQ people are included in those protections. Because it extends nondiscrimination protections for women in public spaces and federal services, addresses the discrimination that people of color and people of minority faiths encounter in such areas as contemporary retail spaces and transportation including car services, and adds clear and explicit protections for LGBTQ people, the Equality Act is the civil rights legislation we need now to move us closer to the promise of freedom and opportunity for all."

Melanie Willingham-Jaggers, Interim Executive Director, GLSEN:

"In this transformational moment, as our nation rethinks what our education system can look like amid the pandemic and reopening, we have the opportunity with the Equality Act to implement a robust new commitment to equity in all aspects of education, from school policies to school lunch programs to classroom repairs to curriculum materials. The ongoing pandemic has hit hardest the communities already vulnerable in our school system – including LGBTQ+ students who face unique challenges – and support and protection to the students and families who need it most will create a stronger school community that benefits all students in our system."

Alphonso David, President, Human Rights Campaign:

"The Equality Act is a pivotal moment in history and serves to be one of the landmark civil rights moments in our country's long march toward a more perfect union. Today, the United States Senate holds equality for the LGBTQ community in its hands and we plan to engage on all fronts, utilizing all tools to ensure that our voices are heard. More than two-thirds of LGBTQ people face discrimination in this country and the overwhelming bipartisan majority of Americans agree: discriminating against someone for who they are or who they love is simply wrong. We plan to work in coalition to end the discrimination, violence, and injustice that LGBTQ people live with every day and ensure that federal non-discrimination protections finally become the law of the land. The time to pass the Equality Act is now."

Kevin Jennings, CEO, Lambda Legal:

"Lambda Legal is proud to stand with advocates for LGBTQ people, people of color, women, and immigrants as a part of the Freedom & Opportunity For All coalition to make the Equality Act a reality. Our communities continue to face pervasive, often-devastating discrimination in our everyday lives. Congress needs to close the many civil rights gaps that have left so many of our community members vulnerable, unprotected, and too often defenseless against injustice in virtually every aspect of public life. We deserve dignity and the same rights and protections as everyone else. There has never been an opportunity like the one now to finally get this done."

David J. Johns, Executive Director, National Black Justice Coalition:

"One of our nation's foundational promises is freedom, but if we are going to celebrate freedom, it must be for all of us: the white

Jewish kid denied a haircut at the only barber shop in town because of their religious beliefs; the Black same gender loving couple given a higher home loan interest rate because of their sexual orientation and race; the interracial couple denied the opportunity to foster or adopt a child because the agency's bias overshadows its mission to give every child a forever home — freedom from discrimination and the ability to participate in public programs must be universal. All of us includes Black transgender women profiled by police and Black boys murdered under the guise of resembling a suspect. All of us include innocent medical workers like Breonna Taylor killed while sleeping at home in their own beds by police officers paid by taxpayer funded federal law enforcement grants. Discrimination should not be legal in a country with the motto 'Out of Many, One.' Passing the Equality Act is necessary if we are to live into our national promise and be who we say we are: The land of the free."

Imani Rupert-Gordon, Executive Director, National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR):

"NCLR is proud to be joining a coalition of advocates from the LGBTQ, women, people of color, immigration, and faith communities who have all joined the Freedom & Opportunity For All coalition to urge the swift passage of the Equality Act in the Senate. The tragic fact is that the LGBTQ community, especially the most vulnerable Black and transgender individuals, continue to report dramatically higher rates of discrimination in every aspect of their lives. Whether it be housing, healthcare, education, lending, or any other facet of everyday life, no one deserves to be discriminated against or denied services simply because of who they are. The Equality Act would amend the Civil Rights Act to finally ensure that everyone is protected from this pervasive discrimination, which is why the Senate must vote to pass it swiftly and send it to President Biden for his signature."

Mara Keisling, Executive Director, National Center for Transgender Equality:

"Passing the Equality Act would mean that transgender people could worry less about disrespect, discrimination, and even violence, and we could live our lives as more full members of society. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect. Transgender people, like all people, should be able to count on protection from discrimination no matter what state they call home. It is long past time for Congress to get this done."

Kierra Johnson, Executive Director, National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund:

"The lives of millions of LGBTQ people in this country and our families would be improved through the Equality Act, best exemplified by the comments of Rep. Marie Newman (D) at the recent Senate Judiciary hearing: 'No American should have to live a lie... you will feel deep depression, anxiety, and yes, suicidal.' This is what is at stake for our community. Our lives. Our children's lives. Our friends' and families' lives. The gift and opportunity of this moment is to look deep inside of our collective selves and ask, 'What are the limits of Love and Justice?' We believe they are unlimited. We will do the work to prove it and are proud to be part of Freedom & Opportunity For All."

Fatima Goss Graves, President and CEO, National Women's Law Center:

"The Equality Act represents a landmark step in the fight against all sex discrimination. The lives of LGBTQ women are marked by discrimination at every step, from the classroom to the boardroom to the locker room, and this bill will strengthen the rights of all women to live free of fear from discrimination. This is especially true of transgender women and LGBTQ women of color, whose risk for violence and abuse is worsened when we deny them full rights under the law. Our commitment to inclusion of transgender women is inseparable from our commitment to safety, dignity, and justice for all women."

Brian K. Bond, Executive Director, PFLAG National:

"Parents of LGBTQ+ people want for their children what all parents want for their children: The opportunity to live, learn, work, pray, and play safely, fairly, and free from discrimination, harassment, and harm. It is especially painful to see faith used as a weapon to exact such discrimination, when so many parents of LGBTQ+ kids ARE people of faith. PFLAGers in every corner of the country will continue to reach out to their lawmakers and send a clear message: To be a person of faith, and to be a person who is — or loves someone who is — LGBTQ+ are not mutually exclusive; our families matter, we are your constituents, and we support passage of the Equality Act."

Michael Adams, CEO, SAGE:

"Our elders have taught us that freedom and opportunity advances when people of good will come together. That is why SAGE is proud to lift up our elders' voices as a co-founder of the coalition to pass the Equality Act."

Amit Paley, CEO and Executive Director, The Trevor Project:

"The Trevor Project is proud to join the Freedom & Opportunity For All coalition to pass the Equality Act and protect the LGBTQ community from discrimination. When LGBTQ young people are excluded or treated differently solely because of who they are, it can negatively impact their mental health and sense of self. According to The Trevor Project's [research](#), LGBTQ youth who experienced discrimination in the past year attempted suicide at more than twice the rate of those who did not. It is long past time to grant LGBTQ people the same legal protections as everyone else."

About the Equality Act

Currently, 29 states do not have laws that explicitly protect LGBTQ people from discrimination. Without the Equality Act, LGBTQ Americans remain vulnerable to being evicted from their homes, kicked out of a business that's open to the public, denied health care, or denied government services in a majority of states simply because of who they are. The Equality Act would provide clear, consistent non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people across critical areas, including housing, credit, education, public spaces and services, federally funded programs, and jury service. The Equality Act also extends protections to millions of women — who aren't covered by some existing federal anti-discrimination laws — to ensure they don't have to live in fear of harassment or discrimination. In addition, it modernizes public accommodations law to provide increased protections to people of color and people of all faiths.

Freedom & Opportunity For All is a national campaign advocating for the urgent passage of the Equality Act – historic federal legislation that would modernize and improve our nation’s civil rights laws by including explicit, permanent protections for LGBTQ people, as well as women, people of color, and people of all faiths. The campaign – supported by [hundreds of the nation’s top leaders](#) in civil rights, faith, education, health care, and advocacy – is co-founded and led by [16 of the nation’s leading advocates](#) for equality, including Center for American Progress; Equality Federation; Freedom for All Americans; GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders; GLSEN; Human Rights Campaign; Lambda Legal; National Black Justice Coalition; National Center for Lesbian Rights; National Center for Transgender Equality; National LGBTQ Task Force; National Women’s Law Center; PFLAG National; SAGE; Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund; and The Trevor Project. **More information can be found at www.PassTheEqualityAct.com.**

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