

2021 EQUALITY TEXAS LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



Equality Texas, the largest statewide organization solely dedicated to securing full equality for LGBTQ Texans, envisions a Texas where lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Texans and their families have full equality in the hearts and minds of our fellow Texans and in all areas of the law and where every person is treated equally with dignity and respect.

LEGISLATIVE TOP PRIORITIES

Our top priority in the 87th Texas Legislative Session in 2021 is to pass a **comprehensive nondiscrimination bill** through the Texas House of Representatives for the first time in Texas history.

This bill would extend nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ people in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

Many Texans are not aware that LGBTQ people can legally be fired, refused housing, or denied services simply because of who we are. This is unkind, inequitable, and unacceptable.

Currently, Texas is one of 27 states where there are no protections from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

The only way to achieve the freedom for LGBTQ people to live, work, earn a living, raise our families, and contribute fully to our communities is to pass a comprehensive, statewide nondiscrimination law that protects all people, including LGBTQ people.

Our second priority in the 87th Texas Legislative Session in 2021 is to keep our transgender community safe by **fighting anti-transgender bills** related to youth sports, medical care bans, and the criminalization of affirming parents and doctors. In addition, we will support any work coalition partners are focused on to expand the rights and recognize the humanity of transgender Texans.

Expanding Opportunity for All

- Support statewide comprehensive nondiscrimination protections for sexual orientation and gender identity, including, but not limited to, employment, housing and public accommodations
- Eliminate barriers for transgender Texans through simplifying and streamlining the process of updating gender markers and names on identity documents such as drivers' licenses and state IDs
- Reduce stigma for those living with HIV/AIDS through decriminalization and supporting public health efforts targeted towards prevention

Helping Youth Thrive

- Eliminate harmful practices targeting LGBTQ youth, including “conversion therapy”
- Validate the existence of LGBTQ teen relationships by updating Texas “Romeo & Juliet” laws to include LGBTQ-inclusive language
- Affirm LGBTQ youth in Texas public schools by removing harmful anti-LGBTQ language from the Texas Education Code
- Increase opportunity for homeless youth, 50% of whom identify as LGBTQ, through increasing access to resources, such as a free ID, which can help obtain employment and housing assistance
- Oppose legislation that would decrease or criminalize access to critical healthcare for transgender youth, such as hormone blockers
- Oppose legislation that would limit equal opportunity for transgender youth to participate in and benefit from athletic programs according to their gender identity

Supporting Texas Families

- Recognize and affirm all Texas families by updating the Texas family code to recognize LGBTQ relationships, including eliminating the unconstitutional ban on sodomy and acknowledging marriage equality
- Ensure that all Texas seniors are treated with dignity and respect through updating elder rights protections to include sexual orientation and gender identity
- Ensure that all Texas families can provide a loving home for children in need through requiring publicly funded adoption agencies to accept all qualified applicants

Keeping Texans Safe

- Protect vulnerable Texans by updating the James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Act to include gender identity. In 2019, Texas was tied for the most fatal anti-transgender violence in the nation
- Eliminate the ability to use sexual orientation or gender identity as an excuse for violent action – eliminate the gay/trans panic legal defense

Holding the Line

- Oppose any attempts to “roll back” current progress towards full equality such as state preemption of local nondiscrimination ordinances or religious exemptions to generally applied laws
- Oppose any legislation that would be discriminatory or otherwise damaging to LGBTQ Texans or that would jeopardize Texas' reputation as a “business-friendly” or “travel/tourism-friendly” destination