



The Equality Act

Introduction

People who identify as LGBTQ+ often face discrimination in many aspects of their daily lives because of the differences in protections in city, county, state, and federal laws. While they may be protected from discrimination in housing in the city in which they reside, they still could face barriers to fair employment or education. Currently, there is no federal law which protects members of the LGBTQ+ community from discrimination in employment, housing, credit, education, public spaces and services, federally funded programs, and jury service. The Equality Act seeks to change this so that we can all live our lives free of harassment or discrimination because of who we are.

Background of the Bills

The Equality Act, H.R. 5 and S. 788, was introduced in the 116th Congress. The House bill was introduced by Representative David Cicilline on 13 March 2019 and the Senate bill was introduced by Senator Jeff Merkley the same day. The House voted to pass the bill on 17 May 2019. The Senate has taken no action on their bill. Both bills prohibit discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in a wide variety of areas including public accommodations and facilities, education, federal funding, employment, housing, credit, and the jury system. Specifically, the bill defines and includes sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity among the prohibited categories of discrimination or segregation. Protections against discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or national origin shall include protections against discrimination based on (1) an association with another person who is a member of such a protected class; or (2) a perception or belief, even if inaccurate, that an individual is a member of such a protected class. Of note, the bill prohibits an individual from being denied access to a shared facility, including a restroom, a locker room, and a dressing room, that is in accordance with the individual's gender identity.

Conclusion

We urge you to contact your congressional representatives and share your support of this historic legislation. This bill has broad support among business groups, major corporations, and about 70% of the population.