

## Talking Points

# Equality Act

### National Council of Jewish Women's (NCJW) Message

NCJW has long worked to build a country in which LGBTQ+ people can thrive, free from violence, fear, and systemic injustices. The Equality Act (HR 15 /S 5), introduced by Representative Mark Takano (D-CA) in the House and Senators Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), and Cory Booker (D-NJ) in the Senate, amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to extend non-discrimination protections to the LGBTQ+ community. This landmark legislation would explicitly prohibit discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation in employment, education, access to credit, jury service, federal funding housing, and public accommodations. **Congress must pass the Equality Act to ensure equal protections for the LGBTQ+ community.**

- **Everyone should be able to live without fear of harassment or discrimination.** Yet, [Center for American Progress's 2022 survey](#) found that LGBTQI+ individuals experience significantly higher rates of discrimination than non-LGBTQI+ individuals, in virtually every setting surveyed — including health care, employment, housing, and public spaces. The Supreme Court's decision in *303 Creative v. Elenis* sanctioning LGBTQ+ discrimination, anti-trans bills sweeping state legislatures, and a patchwork of state non-discrimination laws, means that millions of our family members, friends, neighbors, and colleagues are at risk across key areas of their lives.
- **Federal anti-discrimination laws do not protect people on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.** Laws like the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, and the Jury Selection and Services Act currently include protections from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and religion, but not for LGBTQ+ people. Decades of history show that these laws are effective in decreasing discrimination because they provide strong federal remedies targeted to specific vulnerable groups. By explicitly including sexual orientation and gender identity in these fundamental laws, LGBTQ+ people will finally be afforded the exact same protections as other covered characteristics under federal law.
- **The Equality Act would provide consistent and explicit non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ people across key areas of life.** The Equality Act would amend existing civil rights law to explicitly include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics. It would also amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit

discrimination in public spaces and services and federally funded programs on the basis of sex and update the public spaces and services covered in current law to include retail stores, services such as banks and legal services, and transportation services. These important updates would strengthen existing protections for everyone.