



## **5,000 People of Faith Call on Congress to Pass the Equality Act**

As people of faith, we urge Congress to support the Equality Act. Our faith traditions teach us that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, straight, cisgender, and queer people are all created with sacred dignity and worth. We are taught to respect and love others as ourselves in our words, deeds, and laws. Now is the time to update our federal laws to respect and uphold the sacred dignity and worth of all people. In doing so, we will live up to our nation's values of freedom, equality, and opportunity for all.

In our country today, LGBTQ people—our neighbors, family, friends, and fellow congregants, and for some signatories, we ourselves— are at risk of being fired from a job, refused a place to live, refused service in a place of business, told to leave a bathroom, or refused critical medical care because of who they are or who they love. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is unjust and immoral. We call on Congress to remedy this injustice by passing the Equality Act. This legislation ensures equal protection for all people on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

As people of faith, we believe it is possible to both protect LGBTQ people from unjust discrimination and uphold the freedom of religion. That freedom is one of our nation's most fundamental values, which is why it is protected in the Constitution and remains protected under the Equality Act. As people of faith, we rely on this freedom every day to hold the beliefs we choose and to practice our faiths free from discrimination. It does not give us the right to harm or discriminate against others or impose our religious beliefs on others. We value the freedom of religion and the freedom from discrimination, and we urge Congress to protect both by passing the Equality Act.

We believe equality is a right. Our nation's laws must uphold our values of loving and caring for our LGBTQ neighbors as ourselves. As people of faith, we have an obligation to be part of healing the world. We will not cease in pursuing our commitment to these values until Congress has passed legislation protecting all people from discrimination and fully funds enforcement of these protections. We lament the ways in which religion has been used throughout our nation's history to justify discrimination, including on the basis of race. We refuse to be complicit in attempts to use religion to marginalize LGBTQ communities.

We call on Congress to pass the Equality Act today.

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Brenda Burris  
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