



**Written Testimony of
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Joint Legislative Executive Budget Hearing on Workforce Development

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Good afternoon distinguished members of the Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Workforce Development. My name is Faris Ilyas and I represent the NEW Pride Agenda as Policy Counsel. The NEW Pride Agenda is a statewide education and advocacy nonprofit organization that advocates on behalf of LGBTQ+ New Yorkers. Our mission is to advance the economic, health, racial and gender identity justice needs of LGBTQIA+ and TGNCNBI New Yorkers especially those living on the margins. I'm honored to be here today to testify about the impact of workforce development programs for the transgender community in New York.

In 2022, the NEW Pride Agenda strongly supported the passage of legislation directing the New York State Department of Labor (DOL) to study the barriers to employment faced by transgender people in New York. To that end, the Department of Labor collected data through meetings with transgender advocates and community leaders, conducting five focus groups, and reviewing over 350 online public comments from transgender New Yorkers living in all regions of the state. The findings of this report substantiate what our community has known all along: historically and in the present day, transgender people are the most economically marginalized members of the LGBTQ+ community. I encourage you to read the full report, but I'd also like to pull out key illustrative figures from it.¹

Transgender New Yorkers are twice as likely to be unemployed as cisgender New Yorkers. 31.9% of transgender New Yorkers had incomes below \$25,000, compared to 12.9% of cisgender New Yorkers. Discrimination, harassment, and lack of cultural competency all contribute to these rates, and they were reported as being common experiences for the transgender New Yorkers who participated in the study. As one commenter put it: "I was denied

¹ New York State Department of Labor, 2023 TGNCNB Employment Report, January 2024, <https://dol.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2024/01/tgncnb-report-pdf-version-1.pdf>.

a promotion by a manager who regularly misgendered me, that was instead offered to a cisgender peer with substantially less experience. I was asked to train the person who was promoted.” Or as another commenter put it, “At my previous job my colleagues would often make bathroom jokes, call transgender clients "it", and laugh and disrupt mandatory training regarding LGBTQ+ topics.” These are just some of the quotes from directly impacted individuals who were interviewed for the first-in-the-nation study conducted by the Department of Labor, which I again encourage you to read. Homelessness, criminal records, the cost of higher education, and the need for health insurance that covers gender-affirming care were also named as additional barriers to employment for transgender New Yorkers.

I'd like to share several of the key recommendations mentioned in the DOL report. One of the policy recommendations listed is the NEW Pride Agenda's request to the Governor to expand the Lorena Borjas Transgender and Non Binary Wellness and Equity Fund by an additional \$1M in the FY25 Executive Budget for DOL. We are pleased that the Governor included this proposal in her recent executive budget. We now call on the Legislature to also add funding to the final enacted budget to ensure that New York can become a leader in providing gainful employment opportunities for transgender individuals. The report also recommends that the legislature pass legislation that mandates cultural competency and GENDA compliance training for employers across the state. We fully support this legislation and believe that it will help alleviate some of the workplace discrimination experienced by transgender New Yorkers. Finally, we continue to urge the legislature to consider a Public-Option for employment, or a targeted hiring program that provides a pipeline into government jobs for those living under the federal poverty level, including transgender New Yorkers.

As the state with the second highest transgender youth population, the NEW Pride Agenda looks forward to working with the legislature to ensure that the next generation of transgender New Yorkers are able to live and thrive - not just survive.