



## **2024 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing**

Human Services

January 31, 2024

I want to thank the Chairs and the rest of the Human Services Committee for having me today. My name is Erin Brigid and I am a Community Organizer at Equality New York, the only statewide advocacy organization working to advance equality and justice for all LGBTQI New Yorkers and their families.

In 2023, we witnessed an unprecedented 500+ anti-LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, & Queer) bills across the nation, including New York State, threatening the progress and safety of our community.. Equality New York has been a bastion against this tide, working tirelessly to protect and advance LGBTQ individuals and their families.

Our organization is not merely a group; we are a coalition of over 120 organizations and 5,500 members, deeply rooted in direct community engagement and empowerment. That is who I am representing today.

### **The Immediate Need of LGBTQ Competent Services for New Yorks**

According to *The Williams Institute at UCLA*, as of last year 5.5% of the population (853,600 people) identify as LGBTQ in New York State. As we

Through our advocacy, we have seen first hand a need for safer schools for transgender and non-binary youth, increased access to health and legal services, and systems that continue to misgender and disrespect the community. We have a long way to go. Our initiatives, like the LGBTQI+ Advocacy Institute, have fostered over three

dozen statewide projects that address critical issues from education to health care. Examples include: the creation of a transgender peer support program at hospitals in Rochester who are not competent in serving that community to a campaign to create Gay Straight Alliances (GSA) in Upstate New York.

## **Reasoning for Funding**

We see that so many governmental and service based organizations don't have the skills needed to serve our LGBTQ community, more specifically TGNCNB people. Transgender individuals often face healthcare challenges, with nearly half experiencing mistreatment by medical providers, and 28% avoiding necessary care due to fear of discrimination. In the youth population, suicide is the second leading cause of death among high school-aged youths, with rates increasing significantly from 2009 to 2019. Bullying has been identified as a significant factor, doubling the odds of suicide attempts among adolescents. These statistics underscore the need for supportive environments for transgender individuals and young people.

In addition, we also know that a lot of LGBTQ people don't know their rights when they frequent human services, or what they are entitled to and the laws in place like the

We identify, Transgender, Non-Binary, Gender Non-Confirming (TGNCNB) individuals have the most barriers to accessing human services, especially those who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). As you may already know, in 2019, Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA) which was passed in 2019 which amended the New York State Human Rights Law and explicitly include "gender identity or expression" as a protected class in all areas of jurisdiction, including employment, places of public accommodation, public and private housing, educational institutions and credit

We are requesting \$100,000 for funding that will directly combat the physical, mental, and economic downturn affecting the LGBTQ & TGNCNB community, help train those

serving the community, and ensure every LGBTQ New Yorker can lead a dignified life. We would like to build on our current work and this funding will allow us to do the following:

\$75,000: Conduct 12 additional cultural sensitivity trainings at different hospitals, schools and government entities like disability and health services, serving close to over 3,000 human service providers;

\$25,000: Produce a Know Your Rights Campaign both virtual/social media through a PSA and distributing over 1,000 posters focused on the rights for those in schools, health care providers, and other human services entities.

The ask of \$100,000 is not just a number—it's a lifeline to continue these essential services and programs. This funding will ensure that Equality New York can continue to be an active, vibrant part of the fabric of New York, advocating for justice, equity, and the right to a future free from discrimination. We believe in the power of community, in the strength of unity, and in the unwavering spirit of New York that stands tall against injustice. We ask for your support to continue our vital work.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Erin Brigid  
Community Organizer  
Equality New York