

**Prepared Testimony of State Senator Daniel Squadron to the New York City
Council Committee on Civil Rights on the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination
Act (GENDA) And Equality Act**

June 19, 2017

My name is Daniel Squadron, and I represent the New York State Senate 26th District. My district includes the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Brooklyn Heights, Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill, the Columbia Waterfront, DUMBO, Downtown Brooklyn, Fulton Ferry, Greenpoint, the Navy Yard, Vinegar Hill, and Williamsburg, and the Manhattan neighborhoods of Battery Park City, Chinatown, the East and South Village, the Financial District, Little Italy, the Lower East Side, SoHo, and Tribeca.

As lead sponsor of the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA) in the State Senate, I thank Councilmember Dromm and the City Council's LGBT Caucus for sponsoring Res. 614 in support of GENDA and Res. 1287 in support of the Equality Act. I also thank Chair Mealy and the Committee on Civil Rights for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

Many New Yorkers are surprised to learn that the basic fairness guaranteed for protected classes by state law -- ensuring New Yorkers are not fired, denied housing, or access to public accommodations -- does not explicitly include gender identity or expression.

New York City embraced similar provisions in 2003. Similar protections exist in localities across the state, including the cities of Binghamton, Buffalo, Ithaca, Rochester, Syracuse, and the counties of Albany, Suffolk, Tompkins, and Westchester. The police leadership of New York City, Albany, Binghamton, Ithaca, Rochester, Syracuse, as well as Tompkins and Suffolk counties have all come out in support of the basic fairness guaranteed by GENDA.

These protections are important in their own right and also send an important message. Progress on LGBT equality correlates with reductions in LGBT suicide risk -- and discriminatory legislation correlates with negative mental health outcomes. GENDA could have similar impacts in New York, which makes passage all the more urgent.

In 2015, Governor Cuomo clarified that existing Human Rights Law covers gender identity and expression. As the Trump Administration's actions and the ongoing escalation of federal anti-LGBT rhetoric has highlighted, however, the codification of civil rights progress is critical to ensuring it remains in place regardless of administration.

New York has long been a leader on civil rights in the country, passing the first Human Rights Law in 1945. Our state and city are also credited with the birth of the modern LGBT civil rights movement. Yet the State Senate Majority blocking explicit fairness for transgender New Yorkers has long been a disappointing stain on that proud history.

In April, I forced a vote on S502 (GENDA) in the State Senate's Investigations and Government Operations Committee. Unfortunately, every single Senate Republican on the Committee voted against it. This is made all the more shocking by the State Assembly's tenth passage of GENDA earlier this year, with bipartisan support, where Assemblymember Gottfried sponsors the bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony today.