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TOURISM

LGBTQ+ EQUALITY CAUCUS, CO-CHAIR  
PASSHE CAUCUS, CO-CHAIR

The Honorable Thomas Wolf  
Governor of Pennsylvania  
508 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

**RE: LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus FY 2021-2022 Budget Priorities**

June 9, 2021

Dear Governor Wolf,

It is astonishing that in 2021, whether it is in housing, employment, or access to public accommodations, Pennsylvanians who identify as a member of an LGBTQ+ community are routinely denied the same protections as their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts. In discussing the issues that face their constituents, many of the members of the bicameral, bipartisan LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus have identified common themes in the barriers facing LGBTQ+ Pennsylvanians and their families. Three areas of concern are frequently raised: healthcare, housing, and education. June is pride month, a time to celebrate and uplift LGBTQ+ voices, and as the legislature works throughout June to finalize our state budget, we must ensure that Pennsylvania is doing all it can to support LGBTQ+ communities. Although the LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus recognizes that there are many crucial concerns that demand attention in the budget, we believe that there is no better investment that can be made than in the equality of all Pennsylvanians, and respectfully submit the following requests for consideration in Pennsylvania's FY 2021-2022 budget.

When it comes to housing, LGBTQ+ people of all ages frequently face discrimination and stigma that undermines their ability to have a safe, stable, and affordable place to live. Between 20% and 45% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ+ according to the Williams Institute. Moving into adulthood, only half of LGBTQ+ adults own their home as opposed to 70% of their straight or cisgender counterparts. Poverty and low homeownership rates continue into retirement, and older LGBTQ+ people routinely face barriers when it comes to obtaining affordable senior housing. To that end, our caucus proposes the following measures:

- Housing support for LGBTQ+ Pennsylvanians through rental assistance
- Expanded funding for the creation and support of subsidized housing for LGBTQ+ seniors
- Housing programs for LGBTQ+ youth who have aged out of foster care, specifically to combat high levels of youth homelessness for young people who do not feel safe or stable living with their parents or guardians

In Healthcare, LGBTQ+ Pennsylvanians routinely face discrimination as well. According to the National LGBTQ Task Force, a staggering 56% of LGBT people have experienced some sort of health care discrimination. For trans Pennsylvanians discrimination and ignorance is even more dangerous, with nearly one in five people being refused care outright because they were transgender or gender non-conforming. Countless others face widespread ignorance from providers undertrained in treating trans patients. Though a nondiscrimination law for LGBTQ+ Pennsylvanians would be the swiftest solution to address many of

these issues, without that in place, allocating money in the budget for the following is the best way to ensure equity:

- Funding for health programs to remedy disparities in the LGBTQ+ community such as smoking cessation, cancer screenings, HIV Testing, and providing access to affordable Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)
- Expanding trainings to broaden knowledge of the social determinants of health among healthcare providers

While discrimination and abuse harm some LGBTQ+ youth at home, these problems far too often affect them to school as well. Bullying, discrimination, and harassment are an everyday experience for far too many lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth. According to the Trevor Project’s National Survey of LGBTQ Youth, 40% of LGBTQ+ respondents seriously considered attempting suicide in the past twelve months, and more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth have considered the same. The same survey cites exceedingly high numbers of LGBTQ+ youth feeling discouraged from using the bathroom that corresponds with their gender identity, and frequently having their pronouns disrespected by their peers and teachers. The crisis of mental health among Pennsylvania’s LGBTQ+ youth is disturbing, but safe spaces and social support for youth profoundly improve their outcomes and should be funded in Pennsylvania through the following measures:

- Programs aimed at promoting positive mental health, anti-bullying and suicide prevention for LGBTQ+ students in schools
- After school programming and safe spaces for LGBTQ+ youth
- Comprehensive inclusivity training for educators and curriculum including LGBTQ+ history and comprehensive sexuality education

The Commonwealth is home to countless LGBTQ+ organizations, businesses, and community centers that do incredible work, but unfortunately, they often lack the funding necessary to comprehensively serve their communities. We request that the Commonwealth support LGBTQ+ communities through strategic PILOT programs, the equitable allocation of Cares Act funding, and robust appropriations this budget cycle in the areas of healthcare, housing, and education. Moreover, data collection efforts must be bolstered to ensure that the scope of LGBTQ+ discrimination and inequity in Pennsylvania is understood and addressed. Without a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, many Pennsylvanians do not feel safe enough to speak out, and the true figures of discrimination are fundamentally unknowable. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania must act to ensure equality for all, therefore the LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus requests that LGBTQ+ individuals and communities are made a top priority in the FY 2021-2022 budget.

Sincerely,



Representative Brian Sims  
Co-Chair  
LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus  
182<sup>nd</sup> Legislative District



Senator Katie Muth  
Co-Chair  
LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus  
44<sup>th</sup> Legislative District



Representative Dan Frankel  
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23<sup>rd</sup> Legislative District

CC: The Honorable Kerry Benninghoff  
The Honorable Joanna McClinton  
The Honorable Stan Saylor  
The Honorable Matthew Bradford  
The Honorable Bryan Cutler

The Honorable Kim Ward  
The Honorable Jay Costa  
The Honorable Patrick Browne  
The Honorable Vincent Hughes  
The Honorable Jake Corman