



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN®

SUBMISSION TO THE U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL REGARDING RISING ATTACKS ON LGBTQ+ RIGHTS IN THE UNITED STATES

INTRODUCTION

1. This shadow report serves to provide our feedback regarding the United States's implementation of recommendations received via the 3rd Cycle of its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) under the 36th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, in preparation for its upcoming 4th Cycle UPR.
2. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) is the largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) people in the United States (U.S.). By inspiring and engaging individuals and communities, HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBTQ+ people and realize a world that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all, without exception.
3. LGBTQ+ Americans have fought to achieve equality for decades, including to ensure that our relationships are equal under the law, that our identities are accepted at school and at work, that our service is honored in the military, that disproportionate rates of violence and harassment faced by our community are addressed, and that we are protected from discrimination while seeking access to health care and other services. But, as recently explained by the UN's Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, "those positive measures have been deliberately undermined by a widespread, profoundly negative riptide of regressive legislative measures intended to roll back the human rights of LGBT persons at the state level." Since 2015—when *Obergefell v. Hodges* was decided by the U.S. Supreme Court and extended marriage equality to same-sex couples—state lawmakers have introduced over 2,000 bills across the states that would stymie continued gains in lived or legal equality for LGBTQ+ people. These bills have seen increasing momentum and success: In 2024, nearly 500 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were proposed across the country with 46 bills successfully signed into law in 16 different states, and we are observing similar activity during states' current legislative sessions.
4. As a result, and for the first time in our nearly half-century history, HRC recently declared a national state of emergency for LGBTQ+ people across the country. Our emergency declaration is neither exaggeration nor dramatization, but a sober reflection of the dire circumstances currently faced by the LGBTQ+ community in the U.S. These legislative assaults, and accompanying violent threats and political extremism, are resulting in a health and safety crisis for LGBTQ+ Americans and causing countless families to reconsider whether they want to live and work in the states they call home. In every corner of our country, LGBTQ+ people are currently living in fear, with

parents and children, teachers and health care providers, community leaders, and small business owners left afraid and feeling targeted as their legislators work to restrict the areas of public life where we can freely and openly participate as our true selves, especially transgender youth facing the brunt of these assaults.

5. Since the UN Independent Expert's visit to the U.S. and our emergency declaration, anti-LGBTQ+ extremism has only continued to spread across the country, particularly at the federal level. For example, the FY25 National Defense Authorization Act recently passed into law included a provision blocking healthcare for the transgender children of military servicemembers, and members of Congress have worked to include a record amount of anti-LGBTQ+ language in other appropriations bills and as core aspects of other legislation. And most alarmingly, the Trump Administration has quickly worked to dismantle many of the federal protections, resources, programs, and even agencies that have helped further equality for LGBTQ+ people—beginning on the President's first day in office and with no signs of stopping.
6. Given this rapidly shifting climate for LGBTQ+ people in the U.S., our feedback below is focused on the UN's recommendations that explicitly mentioned LGBTQ+ people, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity, and on discussing recent activities at the federal level presenting escalating threats to the rights and well-being of LGBTQ+ people.

26.140 Strengthen activities and laws aimed at eliminating discrimination in society and other forms of intolerance against minorities and other groups, including based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity (Iceland)

7. The Biden Administration was a strong ally to LGBTQ+ people and actively advocated for the acceptance and safety of LGBTQ+ communities in the U.S. and around the world. Unfortunately, the Trump Administration has taken a radically different approach to LGBTQ+ rights, working to instead exacerbate harm against our communities by actively altering regulations, collections of data, and even the composition of entire government agencies to remove protections, programs, and resources intended to address discrimination and other challenges we continue to face. Troublingly, the U.S. Congress has increasingly adopted this agenda seeking to dismantle LGBTQ+ rights and equality, including through a bill that passed the House of Representatives in January that would prohibit transgender students from participating on school sports teams aligning with their gender identity.
8. The first days of the new administration saw a slew of Executive Orders issued by President Trump, many which targeted the LGBTQ+ community. From attacks on discrimination protections in the workplace to attempts to limit the health care access of transgender, non-binary, and intersex individuals and bans on transgender individuals serving in the military, these executive actions show the administration's focus is on undermining our hard-fought progress. Agencies have worked to quickly implement the

President's goal of eliminating so-called "gender ideology" from every corner of the federal government, including by targeting federal funding for schools that support transgender youth, upending our access to accurate federal identity documents including passports, and modifying to outright erasing existing data, resources, guidance, and regulations.

9. These actions rely on falsehoods about both our lived experiences and the law itself to threaten the rights of any person who does not fit into the administration's narrow view of how people should look and act. For example, President Trump issued an executive order relating to the provision of health care for transgender people throughout the U.S. which ignores that gender-affirming care is supported by every major medical association, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, and the American Psychological Association. The order directs agencies across the federal government to take various actions to bar access to gender-affirming care, including by removing coverage for gender-affirming care from federal health insurance policies, modifying requirements under federal law, and preventing hospitals or other medical providers who accept Medicare or Medicaid, or who receive federal funding for research or education, from providing gender-affirming care of any kind to people under the age of 19. These actions will only serve to exacerbate the existing impact of state laws also seeking to bar access to this care; over four in ten (41.1%) transgender and gender expansive adults already report that they or someone close to them lost access to gender affirming care due to such changes within their states.
10. While some of the administration's current efforts echo anti-LGBTQ+ actions taken during President Trump's first term in office, these recent actions have been significantly more devastating for our communities. For example, the President's new transgender military service ban goes further than its first term counterpart and would completely ban all transgender people from serving in the military and uses language suggesting transgender people are inherently dishonest and dishonorable. Likewise, rather than merely undermining available resources for LGBTQ+ students through the Department of Education, President Trump and Secretary of Education Linda McMahon have begun dismantling the department itself, ordering the firing of thousands of department employees, shuttering regional offices, and threatening to disrupt services including by ending investigations into discrimination claims by LGBTQ+ students and others.

26.146 Take all possible steps at the state and federal levels to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in credit, education, employment, housing, jury service, public accommodation and taxpayer-funded programmes (Belgium)

11. Many of the recent legislative attacks against LGBTQ+ people have sought to eliminate protections under existing non-discrimination laws and even codify

the right of others to discriminate against them merely for being LGBTQ+. These bills cover broad array of topics like blocking parents from accessing best-practice medically-necessary health care for their transgender child, barring young trans people from playing sports, and removing books from school libraries that acknowledge the existence of LGBTQ+ people.

12. Among the President's first set of executive orders was a rescission of President Biden's directive to agencies to implement the Supreme Court ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, which found that our federal employment law's prohibition of discrimination because of sex includes prohibitions of discrimination because of sexual orientation and gender identity. This does not change the fact that the Supreme Court's decision remains binding, and so the President has worked to undermine our rights in employment settings through other actions like illegally firing commissioners from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission—an independent organization responsible for enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person's protected characteristics, including under the law at issue in *Bostock*.
13. The President has sought to exclude LGBTQ+ people from employment both within the federal government and elsewhere, beginning with an order that agencies work to end diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility “mandates, policies, programs, preferences, and activities” throughout the federal government, including by terminating all equity-related grants and contracts. His orders continue by directing agencies to target schools, non-profit institutions, and businesses for their commitment to the belief that a welcoming, inclusive environment drives innovation, boosts productivity, and strengthens the bottom line, and could threaten our gains in ensuring internal workplace policies complement laws that protect LGBTQ+ people from discrimination.
14. Another notable executive order issued by President Trump attempts to dictate to students, their parents, and educators what they can read, learn, say, and who they can be. It utilizes inflammatory and dangerous language to bully LGBTQ+ youth and allies who attempt to support them, and attempts to censor fact-based curriculum that teaches about our nation's history. This order directs the Departments of Education, Defense, and Health and Human Services to work with the Attorney General to develop a strategy within 90 days that includes a plan to eliminate federal funding for K-12 schools that engage in what the order characterizes as “anti-American ideologies,” including education that it says is “based on gender ideology and discriminatory equity ideology.” It also encourages the prosecution of teachers and officials who respect a student's transition and would contribute to learning environments where transgender and other LGBTQ+ people can be freely discriminated against without recourse.

26.147 Guarantee the protection of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and put an end to the discrimination they suffer (France)

15. The Trump Administration's attacks on LGBTQ+ people have been far reaching in their efforts to explicitly harm our community and create barriers for transgender and gender expansive people just trying to live our lives. For example, one executive order targets our rights to free expression, aiming to expunge what they deem "anti-American ideology" from storied institutions like the Smithsonian whose very mission it is to house unadulterated presentations of cultures, histories and stories from the proudly diverse population that makes up our great nation. The order also bans any mention of transgender women in the new American Women's History Museum and directs Vice President JD Vance, who has a history of anti-LGBTQ+ animus, to "eliminate what he finds 'improper' from the Smithsonian Institution, including its museums, education and research centers, and the National Zoo."
16. Alarming, the U.S. Supreme Court has decided to hear a case challenging local and state laws banning so-called "conversion therapy" for LGBTQ+ youth. So-called "conversion therapy," sometimes known as "reparative therapy," is a range of dangerous and discredited practices that falsely claim to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. Such practices have been rejected by every mainstream medical and mental health organization for decades, but due to continuing discrimination and societal bias against LGBTQ+ people, some practitioners continue to conduct conversion therapy. Minors are especially vulnerable, and conversion therapy can lead to depression, anxiety, drug use, homelessness, and suicide. This challenge was filed by Alliance Defending Freedom, an organization that has been behind numerous targeted legal attacks against the LGBTQ+ community, to test whether extremists can use our courts to push their dangerous agenda alongside the federal government's ongoing efforts.
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26.148 Strengthen measures to prevent and combat violence, especially the rate of murder of transgender women of colour, as well as the violence experienced by the broader lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community (Malta)

17. These recent waves of anti-LGBTQ+ bills and executive actions have had far-reaching impacts, including increased rates of harassment, discrimination, and marginalization experienced by members of our communities. It has long been clear that fatal violence disproportionately affects transgender women of color, especially Black transgender women. And yet the Trump Administration has chosen to abandon all the federal government's work intended to cultivate acceptance, reject hate, and end stigma faced by transgender people.
18. And unfortunately, our reporting shows that these senseless killings continue, including in the story of Cameron Thompson, an 18-year-old Black teenage transgender girl from Tuscaloosa, Alabama with a "contagious smile" and love for beauty and fashion. Tragically, Cameron was shot and killed in Tuscaloosa on December 16, 2024: Her death marks at least the 32nd transgender or gender-expansive person killed in the U.S.

in 2024. She was the second transgender person killed in Alabama that year: both were Black transgender teenage girls, and both were killed with a gun. More than 25,000 hate crimes in the U.S. involve a firearm each year, which equates to almost 70 cases a day, according to a 2023 report from Everytown for Gun Safety in partnership with HRC and The Equality Federation Support Fund. That report also notes a marked increase in anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes, especially against transgender people. In 2023, the most recent year for which data is available, the FBI found that more than 1 in 5 hate crimes in the U.S. were motivated by anti-LGBTQ+ bias, with a 16% increase in attacks based on gender identity from the year before.

26.303 Take action to support equitable access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services, and review policies that effectively limit foreign assistance for sexual and reproductive health and rights services abroad (Canada)

19. Finally, we note that the Trump Administration has begun undertaking a drastic restructuring and reduction in force of our nation's public health system and foreign assistance programs. These programs have been especially crucial for LGBTQ+ people and other marginalized populations, providing care and support in the face of relentless stigma and discrimination.
 20. For example, for over 40 years the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been at the forefront of turning HIV from a deadly epidemic into an easily manageable condition for millions of people. But, reports have emerged that the Trump Administration is considering eliminating its Division of HIV Prevention Programs alongside other divisions and staff within the CDC and the Department of Health and Human Services more broadly. These efforts are a clear attack on public health that threatens decades of progress in the fight against HIV and would cost people their lives, despite the President's past promise to end HIV in the U.S. by 2030. Without the CDC's investment, state and local jurisdictions will be left scrambling and with no ability to provide HIV prevention tools, syringe service programs, HIV testing, or essential community outreach.
 21. The administration has taken this approach with our foreign assistance as well, including by reinstating the Global Gag Rule to block funding for reproductive health care organizations worldwide, disproportionately affecting LGBTQ+ people, women, and girls. The Trump Administration's moves to freeze federal funding, including critical foreign aid programs like the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, are jeopardizing decades of life-saving work, putting millions of lives in grave danger, and threatening to unravel the advances we have fought so hard to achieve.
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CONCLUSION

22. These coordinated attacks on LGBTQ+ rights across the U.S. represent a direct threat to the well-being of our communities everywhere—a reality that

demands immediate and decisive action. Across the country, we are seeing the cruel and predictable consequences of these efforts from students facing harassment and discrimination simply for not conforming to narrow gender stereotypes, to marginalized people being cut off from the care and resources critical to their ability to survive.

23. We urge the U.S. Government to quickly and adequately respond to these rising threats, including through the efforts of the Trump Administration, to ensure that the safety and dignity of every LGBTQ+ person in this country is respected and protected.