



March 16, 2021

Chair Dick Durbin
United State Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Durbin,

On behalf of AIDS Foundation Chicago (AFC), an organization dedicated to mobilizing communities to create equity and justice for people living with and vulnerable to HIV, we submit these comments for the record in support of the Equality Act, S. 393 / H.R. 5 (117).

We enthusiastically support the Equality Act because we cannot achieve equity and justice for people living with and vulnerable to HIV if we do not have policies that prevent discrimination against LGBTQ+ people. As an organization that works with and on behalf of people living with or vulnerable to HIV, we understand that our communities' health is not only about access to care, but also about the ways individuals are able to thrive in every arena of their lives. To that end, the Equality Act is a significant and necessary step in the right direction to ensuring that queer and transgender community members are able to plan, navigate, and live their lives free from discrimination and harm.

Importantly, we support the fact that the Equality Act does not permit discrimination sheltered under the guise of religious freedom. Passing the Equality Act will stop businesses from using laws like the Religious Freedom Restoration Act as a reason to discriminate against queer and trans people based on inherent and immutable qualities. Religious beliefs cannot and should not be an avenue by which LGBTQ+ people are denied access to lifesaving healthcare, stable housing, or equal employment.

In our 35 years of existence, AFC has worked with people from every walk of life. We have seen what housing, employment, and healthcare discrimination do to our community. We have seen some of our advocates blocked from their goals – not because they have not worked for them, but because another person has decided they do not respect, “agree with,” or value something inherent and innate about them. We are, therefore, clear in our support of the Equality Act, which will help combat the targeted discrimination that LGBTQ+ community members face and help usher in a future where both equality and equity are possible.

Sincerely,

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