



INTERFAITH
ALLIANCE
PROTECTING FAITH AND FREEDOM

The Equality Act

Interfaith Alliance celebrates the inherent dignity and worth of all people. With members adhering to over 75 different religious traditions, as well as those who are nonreligious or secular, we are united in our shared commitment to protecting personal belief and ensuring that all Americans receive equal treatment under law.

Religious freedom protects personal belief. It is not license to discriminate. Faith traditions approach matters of sexual orientation and gender identity differently. By guaranteeing the separation of church and state, the First Amendment protects religious communities from governmental interference in their doctrines. But, by the same token, we count on our elected representatives to advance policies that set a standard of nondiscrimination within the public sphere – whether we share our neighbors’ beliefs or not.

THE EQUALITY ACT IS NECESSARY TO STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND OUR CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS

Despite significant steps forward, LGBTQ+ Americans lack basic legal protections in states across the country. The patchwork nature of current laws leaves millions of people subject to uncertainty and potential discrimination that can endanger their physical and mental health, their families, and their futures.

The Equality Act would strengthen existing civil rights laws and provide consistent nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ people nationwide. These protections would apply to employment, housing, credit, education, public spaces and services, jury service, and federally funded programs by:

- Explicitly protecting LGBTQ+ people by adding sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics under current civil rights laws.
- Modernizing existing laws to prohibit discrimination against protected classes in retail stores, service providers, and transportation services. This includes protections against religious discrimination.
- Defining sex discrimination to include pregnancy and childbirth as well as assumptions about how someone *should* act based on their gender, known as “sex stereotyping.”
- Preserving existing religious exemptions to civil rights laws while clarifying that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) to cannot be misused to justify discrimination in the public sphere.

The Equality Act has unprecedented support from the vast majority of Americans. The nonpartisan Public Religion Research Institute found that over 70% of people supported a bill like the Equality Act, including a majority of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.

AFFIRMING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND LGBTQ+ EQUALITY

Religious freedom and nondiscrimination protections are complementary, not contradictory, values. Every person deserves to live without fear of discrimination or harm. This is equally true for people of all genders, sexual orientations, and beliefs. To learn more about Interfaith Alliance’s work to advance LGBTQ+ equality please contact Katy Joseph, Director of Policy & Advocacy, at kjoseph@interfaithalliance.org.