

# Wisconsin Businesses for Equality: Launches to support transgender equality legislation

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MILWAUKEE — The Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce and Fair Wisconsin proudly announced the formation of Wisconsin Businesses for Equality, a coalition committed to updating Wisconsin's non-discrimination law to protect our transgender community. Founding members include Froedtert Health, Kohler Co., ManpowerGroup, Milwaukee Bucks and UW Health.

"We believe it's time to update and modernize our state laws to add nondiscrimination protections based on gender identity and expression," said Jason Rae, President & CEO of the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce.

"We must embrace diversity by enabling all individuals to cultivate their skillsets and develop successful, sustainable careers," said Becky Frankiewicz, president of ManpowerGroup North America. "A strong and thriving business community means empowering people to participate in the workplace. ManpowerGroup is honored to actively support the Wisconsin Businesses for Equality Campaign. Together, we can put people to work and truly create positive change throughout our community."

"Until the day that all transgender Wisconsinites are protected by law, we all stand to lose," said Megin McDonell, Executive Director of Fair Wisconsin. "Businesses know that this isn't just good for the bottom line, it is also the right thing to do."

In 1982, Wisconsin became the first state in the nation to protect lesbian, gay and bisexual people from discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations. However, the law only protects individuals based on sexual orientation and not gender identity and expression.

The Wisconsin LGBT Chamber recently commissioned a poll that found that 63% of people in Wisconsin believe the state's non-discrimination laws should be updated to protect transgender individuals.

"Wisconsin Businesses for Equality will work to tell the story to the State Legislature about the need to update and modernize Wisconsin's non-discrimination law to protect members of the transgender community," said McDonell. "We hope that other businesses will join us in our effort as members of the coalition."

"Working together, we can make sure Wisconsin is a competitive place to do business, but more importantly, that Wisconsin is a welcoming and inclusive place for all people - without regard to gender identity or expression," added Rae.

A bill has been introduced in the Wisconsin State Legislature co-authored by Rep. Mark Spreitzer, Rep. JoCasta Zamarripa, and Sen. Tim Carpenter called The Privacy Protection and Gender Identity Anti-Discrimination Act. This bill adds gender identity and expression to the state's 1982 non-discrimination law.

Businesses wishing to add their name to members of the coalition can do so at <http://www.wibusinessesforequality.com/sign-the-pledge/>.

Wisconsin Businesses for Equality is a joint project of Fair Wisconsin and the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce.

Fair Wisconsin Inc. works to build a fair, safe, and inclusive Wisconsin for all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people by advancing, achieving, and protecting LGBT civil rights through lobbying, legislative advocacy, grassroots organizing, coalition building and electoral involvement. More information can be found online at: [www.fairwisconsin.com](http://www.fairwisconsin.com).

The Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce is an organization of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and LGBT-allied businesses, corporations and professionals throughout the state of Wisconsin. It offers networking opportunities, business development efforts within the LGBT community, and educational programming to its members. The organization has more than 500 members from around the state. In 2015, the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce received the National Chamber of the Year Award from the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC). More information can be found online at: [www.wislgbtchamber.com](http://www.wislgbtchamber.com).