

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Following SCOTUS ruling, Senators lead push to bring Equality Act to a vote

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Cory Booker (D-NJ)—along with Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA), Senate Judiciary Committee Ranking Member Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY)—are leading a call for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to bring the *Equality Act* to the Senate floor for a vote.

The senators' push comes after the Supreme Court issued a 6-3 ruling to confirm that the nation's landmark civil rights legislation preventing workplace discrimination protects LGBTQIA+ Americans.

“Although nearly two-thirds of LGBTQIA+ Americans report experiencing discrimination, existing federal law provides insufficient recourse,” the senators wrote in their letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. “The Equality Act would provide unequivocal non-discrimination protections for people on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity in a number of areas, including public spaces and services, housing, education, credit, jury service, and federally funded programs, as well as explicitly codifying the Supreme Court’s holding regarding employment. By explicitly including sexual orientation and gender identity in civil rights laws, we can ensure that every person can live their life free from harassment and discrimination.”

“We have a responsibility to reaffirm the principle that harassment and

discrimination are not tolerated in our country. We urge you to bring the Equality Act for a vote because all people, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity, should enjoy the same protections under law that all Americans already enjoy on the basis of religion, race, gender, and more," **the senators concluded.**

Senators Baldwin, Merkley, Collins and Booker are the lead Senate cosponsors of the *Equality Act*—groundbreaking, comprehensive legislation that would add explicit protections for LGBTQIA+ Americans to the nation’s civil rights laws, ensuring that no American is evicted from their home or is denied a service based on their LGBTQ status. The bill, [which was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in 2019](#), would clarify that just like religious, racial, or gender discrimination, anti-LGBTQIA+ discrimination is illegal everywhere in the United States of America.

Senators Baldwin, Merkley, Collins, Booker, Murray, Feinstein, and Schumer were joined in sending the letter by U.S. Senators Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Robert Casey, Jr. (D-PA), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Mark Warner (D-VA), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Tom Carper (D-DE), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Angus King (I-ME), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Tina Smith (D-MN), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Gary Peters (D-MI), Chris Coons (D-DE), Tom Udall (D-NM), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Jon Tester (D-MT), Jack Reed (D-RI), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Doug Jones (D-AL), Joe Manchin (D-WV), and Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ).

The full letter is available [here](#) and below. An online version of this release is available [here](#).

Dear Senator McConnell:

We write to urge you to immediately bring the bipartisan Equality Act (H.R. 5) to the Senate floor for a vote and fully enshrine in federal law explicit protections for

LGBTQIA+ people against discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity. This bill enjoys bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress and has been endorsed by a broad coalition that includes over 275 businesses, 50 trade and professional associations, and 500 advocacy organizations.

Yesterday, in a landmark victory for justice and equality, the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that employers cannot unfairly fire or otherwise discriminate against LGBTQIA+ people in the workplace. However, current gaps in nondiscrimination laws leave many people subject to discrimination, which is why we urge you to schedule a vote to pass the Equality Act.

Although nearly two-thirds of LGBTQIA+ Americans report experiencing discrimination, existing federal law provides insufficient recourse. The Equality Act would provide unequivocal non-discrimination protections for people on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity in a number of areas, including public spaces and services, housing, education, credit, jury service, and federally funded programs, as well as explicitly codifying the Supreme Court's holding regarding employment. By explicitly including sexual orientation and gender identity in civil rights laws, we can ensure that every person can live their life free from harassment and discrimination.

The need for these critical protections is clear. LGBTQIA+ people face high rates of discrimination in employment, health care, housing, and other public accommodations on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity. According to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, approximately one-fourth of individuals surveyed reported problems with insurance coverage as a result of their gender identity. According to a 2017 survey conducted by the Center for American Progress, approximately 29 percent of transgender people reported being denied health care because of their actual or perceived gender identity. Eight percent of survey respondents reported being denied health care because of their sexual orientation. LGBTQIA+ people living outside of major metropolitan areas also reported a high rate of difficulty in finding alternative health care services because such services were further away from their homes. Around 40 percent of non-metropolitan LGBTQ people said it would be "very difficult" or "not possible" to find the same type of service at a different hospital.

LGBTQIA+ tenants often face housing discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity. A 2013 study conducted by HUD found that same-sex couples experience less favorable treatment than heterosexual couples in the online rental housing market. According to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, nearly one-in-four transgender adults report experiencing some kind of housing discrimination, including being evicted or denied a home. Almost one-third of transgender individuals report experiencing homelessness at some point in their lives, and transgender women of color experience especially high rates of homelessness. Nearly one in four young Black men, ages 18 to 25, identifying as LGBTQ reported homelessness in the last 12 months.

The Equality Act would build on the historic Supreme Court decision protecting LGBTQ people in employment and make it explicitly clear that all federal discrimination laws protect people on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. In a 2019 poll by the Public Religion Research Institute, 69 percent of those surveyed say they support laws that would protect LGBTQ people in employment, housing, and public accommodations. Given the patchwork of state discrimination laws, providing clarity on our anti-discrimination laws will benefit LGBTQIA+ communities, landlords, health care providers, and businesses.

We have a responsibility to reaffirm the principle that harassment and discrimination are not tolerated in our country. We urge you to bring the Equality Act for a vote because all people, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity, should enjoy the same protections under law that all Americans already enjoy on the basis of religion, race, gender, and more.

Sincerely,

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