

U.S. Sens. Baldwin, Merkley, Booker: Announce Senate Introduction of Landmark, Urgently Needed LGBTQ Rights Bill

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) today joined Senators Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Cory Booker (D-NJ) to announce the upcoming Senate introduction of the *Equality Act*—historic, comprehensive legislation to ban discrimination against LGBTQ Americans, just as religious, racial, and gender discrimination are illegal everywhere in the United States.

The announcement coincided with the bill's introduction by Representative David Cicilline in the U.S. House of Representatives. The House passed the *Equality Act* in 2019 but it was buried in former Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's legislative graveyard. The Senate bill will be formally introduced next week when the Senate floor re-opens for bill introductions.

“It is just wrong that in a majority of states, LGBTQ Americans live without fully-inclusive non-discrimination laws and can still face discrimination simply because of who they are or who they love. It is time to end this kind of discrimination because LGBTQ Americans should have the freedom of full equality,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “I know the House will do its job to pass the *Equality Act* and the Senate should do the same and get the job done so that we provide full equality for every LGBTQ American across our country.”

“All of us go to work and school, go home, and go shopping, and none of us should have to keep our families hidden or pretend to be someone we’re not to do those things,” **said Senator Merkley**. “But in 29 states, Americans can still be evicted, be thrown out of a restaurant, or be denied a loan because of who they are or whom they love. We all love the vision of America as a land of freedom and equality, but are we willing to take the steps to make that vision closer to reality? Let’s buckle down and make 2021 the year that the *Equality Act* gets across the finish line and signed into law to outlaw LGBTQ discrimination.”

“As long as there are people who face discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, we have work to do. I am proud to reintroduce this groundbreaking legislation with Senators Merkley and Baldwin that will clarify and codify that federal civil rights law protects LGBTQ+ Americans,” **said Senator Booker**. “This legislation signifies the best of who we are as Americans. But the fact that we need this legislation reflects the worst of who we are. If we are going to celebrate ideals of liberty and freedom, we must have comprehensive and nationwide protections for LGBTQ+ Americans.

The legislation would amend the landmark federal anti-discrimination laws to explicitly add sexual orientation and gender identity to longstanding bans on discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, jury service, access to credit, federal funding, and more. It would also add protections against sex discrimination in parts of anti-discrimination laws where these protections had not been included previously, such as public accommodations and federal funding.

LGBTQ equality received a huge boost across the nation last June when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Bostock v. Clayton County* that workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is prohibited as a form of sex discrimination under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. However, this court ruling has not yet been nationally applied to other areas of potential discrimination—including housing, public accommodations, jury service, access to credit, and more. Many Americans believe that such protections are already explicitly written into federal civil rights law, but this is not the case. The *Equality Act* would finally enshrine these protections into federal law under all areas of potential discrimination and ensure that these essential protections for LGBTQ Americans are not subject to the whims of a changing court.

The full text of the *Equality Act* is available [here](#).



An online version of this release is available [here](#).