

A Vision for LGBTQ+ New Yorkers

Introduction

New York has prided itself on being the birthplace of the LGBTQIA+ rights movement, and long aspired to be a place where LGBTQIA+ people can live, thrive, and determine our own futures. But today, across the country and here at home, our rights, our safety, and even our survival are under coordinated attack.

The federal government has escalated a campaign to dismantle protections for queer and trans people—using our health care, schools, and families as political battlegrounds. The U.S. Department of Education has taken New York City public school funding hostage, demanding the rollback of essential anti-discrimination safeguards as a ransom for resources. President Trump has threatened hospital funding nationwide in an attempt to force an end to gender-affirming care, and leading institutions have capitulated by pausing life-saving treatment.

These federal attacks have been compounded by the passage of HR1, which gutted key parts of the social safety net—cutting access to Medicaid, Medicare, SNAP, and other essential programs—in order to further enrich the wealthiest Americans. These cuts strip economic security from poor, working-, and middle-class communities and fall hardest on LGBTQIA+ people and communities of color, pushing our communities further to the margins and deepening the social, health, and economic harms we find intolerable.

And these assaults are not limited to Washington. In New York State, discriminatory rhetoric is becoming policy. The Nassau County executive has enacted a trans sports ban, aiming to exclude and stigmatize transgender athletes. And this hate has spread from Nassau County: Last year, S.460, a trans sports ban, advanced through the New York State Senate Education Committee. In Manhattan District 2, community advocates, parents, and supporters fought against a Community Education Council Board resolution barring trans athletes from participating on girls' sports teams. And school officials across the state are retreating from basic protections for transgender students, undermining their safety and blocking their access to full participation in school life.

These local attacks mirror a broader pattern of racialized and anti-LGBTQIA+ policymaking nationwide: efforts to censor teaching about race, gender, and sexuality; criminalization campaigns that disproportionately target Black, Brown, and immigrant communities; and attempts to roll back decades of progress in civil rights. These

strategies share a common goal—to shrink public life, restrict bodily autonomy, and make marginalized communities easier to control, punish, or erase.

These are not abstract policy debates. These are deliberate acts of political violence that put LGBTQIA+ people—especially transgender people, young people, and queer and trans people of color—at direct risk. Yet even in this hostile climate, queer and trans New Yorkers continue to fight for each other, build power together, and demand more than survival.

This past budget cycle, New York State expanded the Lorena Borjas Transgender Wellness & Equity Fund, the nation’s second state-level fund dedicated to supporting trans-led organizations. Lawmakers increased the FY2026 allocation by \$500,000, bringing the fund to \$4.75 million annually. This is a material investment in health care, housing stability, economic opportunity, and the leadership of trans people shaping our own futures.

New York City carried that progress forward. The city committed nearly \$14 million to community services—including a historic, first-ever \$3.5 million dedicated specifically to gender-affirming care. In direct defiance of Trump’s threats to cut off resources from institutions that provide this critical care, the City took bold action to protect trans lives and strengthen access to treatment. This is what it looks like when government chooses to stand with us.

These victories prove that it is possible to choose courage over convenience, and that New York can be a national model of LGBTQIA+ safety, respect, and liberation. But progress is not guaranteed. It must be protected, expanded, and codified into the infrastructure of our laws, our budgets, and our institutions. At this moment of national crisis, New York has a moral responsibility—and an opportunity—to show the country what real commitment to LGBTQIA+ people looks like.

This Vision for LGBTQ+ New Yorkers lays out the concrete steps lawmakers must take to make New York a true beacon for the LGBTQIA+ community: protecting our rights, defending our safety, safeguarding our health care, investing in our communities, and ensuring that every queer and trans New Yorker has the freedom to live without fear.

New York can lead. New York must lead. Our lives and futures depend on it.

Protect and Strengthen Our Social Safety Net

The federal government is gutting the safety net programs that LGBTQIA+ communities, communities of color, low-income communities, older adults, people with disabilities, and those who exist at the intersection of these identities have relied on for survival.

These programs meet urgent needs for cash, food, and health care. New York must ensure timely access to adequate nutrition assistance, cash assistance, and health insurance benefits for all eligible New Yorkers, and create a state food benefit for people excluded from federal SNAP solely due to their immigration status.

These federal cuts do not land on neutral ground—they deepen long-standing inequities that have already pushed LGBTQIA+ New Yorkers, particularly those at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities, to the margins of our economy and health care systems. For far too long, LGBTQIA+ New Yorkers have faced discrimination and unequal access to dignified care, leaving our communities to bear a disproportionate burden of preventable hunger, unemployment, social isolation, and disease.

Social safety-net programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, and SNAP are critical to help address the fundamental inequity that plagues our communities. These programs meet urgent needs for cash, food, and health care.

Our communities are being directly targeted by Congress and federal government cuts to these critical programs. Additionally, the federal government is actively instituting discriminatory policies that limit LGBTQIA+ Americans' access to these programs, starting by demonizing health care access for transgender and gender non-conforming people.

HR1 institutes unreasonable bureaucratic barriers designed to generate saving by depriving over 1.5 million New Yorkers with limited economic means to access health care. Cuts to Affordable Care Act subsidies, Medicaid, Medicare, and SNAP have significant consequences for the LGBTQ+ community, limiting access to essential health care, nutrition, and support services that many rely on in a manner that is both overwhelming and cruel.

New York has a responsibility to support our communities regardless of federal action by maintaining access to these critical safety-net programs.

Ensure Gender Affirming Care for TGNC New Yorkers

Gender-affirming care is life-saving care. It is supported by every major medical organization and relied on by transgender and gender nonconforming New Yorkers of all ages. Yet the federal government is escalating attacks designed to eliminate or restrict access to this care, particularly for young people and low-income patients.

New York must act decisively to protect continuity of care and ensure that no one loses medically necessary treatment because of federal political interference. This includes maintaining state Medicaid and private health insurance coverage for gender-affirming

care regardless of changes to federal funding rules and ensuring that young people already receiving care are not forced to stop treatment.

At the same time, federal threats to strip Medicare and Medicaid funding from hospitals that provide gender-affirming care are placing enormous pressure on health systems and providers. These efforts attempt to override medical judgment and interfere in deeply personal decisions that belong to patients, families, and providers—not politicians.

New York must support providers and patients by investing in sustainable care models and state-level solutions that guarantee access to gender-affirming care across the state. And, it must provide prospective patients with a straightforward way to determine whether the hospital in their area provides the care they need before they are admitted or find themselves in a maze of phone calls.

Protecting health care access is not only about defending trans communities—it is about upholding the principle that everyone deserves control over their own body and medical decisions.

Support Our Youth

Every young person deserves to feel safe at home and in their community. Families with queer youth are moving to New York because they're losing access to health care in their home states. They're seeking refuge here in hopes that New York will fight the federal administration, ensure continued access to gender-affirming care, and ensure that their children will be safe from harm at school and in their communities.

The federal government's attacks on gender-affirming care are aimed specifically at hospitals that provide this care to minors. Anti-trans rhetoric places LGBTQIA+ youth at risk of gender identity-based violence and bullying at the hands of not just their peers, but adults in their communities who believe transgender youth should not be in the same bathrooms or locker rooms or on the same sports teams as their peers. We know that LGBTQIA+ are at a higher risk of homelessness and suicide than straight, cisgender youth. These risks only increase when they are denied gender-affirming care.

The State can send a message that LGBTQIA+ youth are safe here by advancing legislation like Freedom to Read—to empower librarians to curate libraries that reflect their communities—and the Healthy and Safe Students Act, as well as youth suicide prevention legislation and funding. It must also invest in LGBTQIA+-specific homeless and runaway youth services programs.

Enact Privacy Protections to Safeguard LGBTQIA+ New Yorkers

All of us—Black, white, or brown; Native or newcomer; transgender or not—deserve to live safely and authentically. At a moment when the federal government is working to criminalize health care, undermine privacy, and divide communities along lines of race and gender, New York must lead by strengthening legal protections that allow people to live and thrive without fear.

This includes giving patients greater control over their personal medical information. Electronic health records are essential to modern care, but without safeguards they can expose transgender New Yorkers and their providers to discrimination, surveillance, or criminalization—especially across state lines. New York should require systems that allow patients to limit access to sensitive information at their discretion.

New York must also update its Prescription Monitoring Program to ensure it is not weaponized against transgender people. Because testosterone is tracked and shared across states, trans patients and providers are already at risk of being targeted by hostile officials elsewhere. Removing testosterone from the program would protect access to care while preserving the program's original purpose.

And, New York must give us control over our commercial health data, like Fitbit data, smartwatch data, and changes in purchasing patterns that reveal health status, and make it harder for bad actors—whether hostile states, the federal government, or corporations—to use those data against us.

Finally, New York must protect privacy in name and gender marker changes. Court-based processes that make deeply personal information publicly accessible put transgender people and survivors of violence at risk. These records can expose someone's history, address, or immigration status and effectively out them without consent. Name and gender marker changes should be treated as private, confidential matters, like the vast majority of other legal name changes.

Taken together, these protections are about one core principle: people should control their own information, identities, and lives. New York has the power to ensure that privacy, dignity, and safety are not privileges—but rights.

Decriminalize Our Lives: End the Criminalization of LGBTQIA+ New Yorkers

Across New York State, LGBTQIA+ people—especially Black and Brown New Yorkers, transgender and gender-expansive people, immigrants, and people living in poverty—continue to be harmed by systems of criminalization that punish who we are and how we survive. From discriminatory policing and profiling, to arrests tied to sex work and public space, to outdated laws that treat health care as a crime, criminalization remains a daily reality for many in our communities.

This is not about safety. Policing and punishment have never kept our communities safe. True safety comes from dignity, autonomy, and the freedom to live without fear of arrest, harassment, or incarceration.

New York has the opportunity—and the responsibility—to move toward that vision by advancing a decriminalization agenda that centers care over punishment. This includes passing legislation such as Cecilia’s Act, which would fully decriminalize consensual adult sex work; repealing laws that criminalize people based on sexually transmitted infections; and enacting the Gender Identity Respect, Dignity, and Safety Act to ensure the safety and dignity of transgender and gender-expansive people in custody.

Together, these reforms would reduce police violence, improve public health outcomes, and affirm a basic truth: our bodies, our genders, and our survival should never be crimes.

For generations, LGBTQIA+ New Yorkers have been punished for surviving and caring for one another. We are calling on lawmakers to end that harm—not with symbolic gestures, but with real structural change. Decriminalization is not radical. What is radical is continuing to allow our communities to be targeted, incarcerated, and denied their humanity.

We urge LGBTQIA+ New Yorkers and our allies to organize, testify, and demand better. Our liberation has always been built by us. When we move together, change follows.

A Vision for LGBTQ+ New Yorkers is endorsed by:

Amida Care

Albany Damien Center

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Destination Tomorrow

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Gender Equality New York

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