



LGBTQ+ Priorities for the Next Presidential Term

BACKGROUND

In June 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Bostock v. Clayton County* confirmed that federal workplace civil rights protections on the basis of sex include protections for LGBTQ+ people. This landmark decision, while significant, is just one piece of a broader effort to address the high rates of poverty within the LGBTQ+ community. **In the next presidential term, the federal government must take additional action to dismantle barriers to social and economic justice for LGBTQ+ people.**

The LGBTQ+ community experiences higher rates of poverty and participation in federal anti-poverty programs than the general population. This dynamic is even more pronounced for transgender and gender nonconforming people. LGBTQ+ people also face compounded discrimination based on intersecting identities due to systemic racism, xenophobia, sexism, and ableism.

The National LGBTQ Anti-Poverty Action Network (The Network) is a member-based coalition of over 100 national, state, and local organizations working in the LGBTQ+, anti-poverty, and anti-hunger movements to increase awareness about and action on LGBTQ+ poverty. As the next presidential term begins, the White House should consider championing the following priorities across federal departments and agencies.

INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Although Congress has the power of the purse, the President's Budget is an effective tool in setting spending priorities for a future fiscal year and should rightly be viewed as a moral document reflective of the Administration's morals and values. Domestic programs are consistently underfunded at the expense of a bloated defense budget. In recent years, increased spending on homeland security priorities – including immigration enforcement – have detracted from necessary investments in domestic human needs programs. **Far too often, federal dollars are also used to increase the policing and imprisoning of communities of color, which exacerbates the violence Black and brown LGBTQ+ people regularly experience by the criminal legal system.** In the next presidential term, the White House should prioritize investing new funding into domestic programs, including community-based programs and services to address the needs of LGBTQ+ people and families with low incomes. Within domestic spending, the White House should deprioritize spending on anti-immigrant enforcement, policing, and incarceration.

Federal departments and agencies should also enhance their data collection and research efforts with respect to LGBTQ+ people with low incomes to inform policy and spending decisions. This includes directing the Census Bureau to take necessary steps to include sexual orientation and gender identity questions to both the decennial census and the American Community Survey. Too often, federal surveys fail to inquire about sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression (SOGIE). By insisting on inclusive survey tools across all departments and agencies, the federal government can create a clearer picture of the scope of LGBTQ+ poverty and better direct states, grantees, and other stakeholders toward addressing specific needs.

STRENGTHENING ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAMS

Addressing poverty within the LGBTQ+ community also requires robust investment in proven supports, including the wide range of federal programs that address basic needs. The White House should commit to enhancing existing benefits and streamlining application processes, making it easier for families to access the vital support offered by Medicaid,

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Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), the federal nutrition programs, housing assistance, access to education and job training programs, and other critical programs. To best support the needs of families, the White House must act swiftly to rescind the harmful rules that weaken or terminate program access, including the recent public charge rules, which chill participation among eligible immigrant families in critical health, nutrition, and housing programs. Additionally, the White House should move swiftly to promulgate rules that would enhance program access and protections of low-income and vulnerable populations.

While existing programs provide critical, though often insufficient, support on the individual level, bolder action is needed to address systemic economic inequalities. The White House should fight to raise wages for all workers, make health insurance more affordable and available for all without sacrificing quality, make the tax code more equitable, reduce student loan debt, implement paid medical and family leave and other labor protections, prioritize human needs and the environment over corporate profits, expand access to programs for formerly incarcerated people, and remove barriers to economic mobility and justice. These solutions must also account for workers who are often excluded from workplace rights and justice related conversations, including sex workers and undocumented people.

FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION

The Supreme Court's landmark *Bostock* decision confirms that Title VII's prohibition on sex discrimination encompasses protections tied to sexual orientation and gender identity. Given that this analysis applies to areas beyond employment, the White House should take swift steps to implement that decision across the full range of federal sex discrimination laws and policies, as well as endorsing and prioritizing passage of the Equality Act. **The White House must also take a strong stance against any broad or additional religious exemptions to LGBTQ+ discrimination protections.** Despite the broad scope of the Court's analysis in *Bostock*, which will apply to discrimination in a wide range of fields including education, housing, and healthcare, robust executive action and additional legislation is crucial to confront discrimination and create a more inclusive society.

The federal government should also seek proactive opportunities to leverage existing programs to address disparities for the LGBTQ+ community, including by expanding definitions of vulnerable populations or underserved communities to better target funding and services to LGBTQ+ people with low incomes. These steps – taken at the agency or department level – would help focus existing efforts to combat facets of poverty, whether it be health disparities, hunger, homelessness, unemployment, or other form of need, while also delivering targeted assistance to LGBTQ+ people and families. Additional steps to proactively issue guidance and require data collection and SOGIE training could help mitigate discriminatory behaviors by federal employees or grantees.

ACTION IS NEEDED

A wide range of legislative, regulatory, budgetary and executive actions are needed to address the social and economic factors contributing to LGBTQ+ poverty. To coordinate efforts throughout the federal government and facilitate information sharing across federal departments, the Network recommends that the White House convene an inter-agency LGBTQ+ Anti-Poverty Task Force. The Network is ready to partner with this Task Force and assist other federal stakeholders in order to address the systemic barriers to social and economic justice for LGBTQ+ people with low incomes.