equality federation

2021 annual report
2021 was an unparalleled year.

We saw a record-breaking 390+ anti-LGBTQ+ bills at the state level, with 198 being explicitly anti-transgender. Our opposition is motivated and unscrupulous, succeeding in passing 28 anti-LGBTQ+ bills. However, we defeated 180 anti-trans bills (90%), and we also saw 921 pro-LGBTQ bills introduced.

Equality Federation deepened our support of state partners this past year, providing members access to the organizing tools and messaging needed to advance LGBTQ+ equality. And we completed work with our first cohort in our Project Game Changer program to execute year-round civic engagement strategies.

During our second-ever virtual Leadership Conference, we brought together 150 state and national movement leaders to build relationships that fuel and sustain them through challenging times. We are looking forward to gathering in person this year to celebrate our 25th annual Leadership Conference in Minneapolis.

With everything our world, our country, and our LGBTQ+ community endured in 2021, I want to take a moment to say thank you. Thank you for all the ways you supported us during a year of such grief and turmoil.

The heart of Equality Federation’s work has always been building strong, resilient, adaptive leaders to achieve full, lived equality for our community. I could not be more proud to work alongside the leaders in the state-based movement and to have the support of individuals like you after such a challenging year.

Onward,

Fran Hutchins
Executive Director | Equality Federation
The greatest opportunities for victories to improve the lives of LGBTQ+ people are in the states where the work is hard but the impact is great.

Equality Federation builds state-based leadership and resiliency through our programs to catalyze the national movement for equality and win policy changes.
OUR ADVOCACY & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM works collaboratively with our partners to maximize state advocacy on critical issues, mobilize the people power needed to create change, and set an expansive policy agenda to address our entire community’s needs.

We track every piece of LGBTQ+-related legislation in the states—hundreds of bills each year—so we can provide advocates on the ground with the strategy sessions, organizing, messaging, communications, and policy resources they need.
OUR LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM works to develop strong leaders, connect movement advocates, and build powerful organizations that can sustain the movement for equality and justice in the states.

We provide critical opportunities for training, peer learning, and networking through the annual Equality Federation Institute Leadership Conference, which has become the movement-wide go-to gathering of state leaders and national partners; our regional Leadership Summits; and regular online training opportunities.
OUR STATE PARTNERS mobilize more than 2 million supporters across the country to advance equality and justice for LGBTQ+ people in the communities they call home.

Since 1997, we have become the leading movement builder, national network, and strategic partner to our 40+ state partners.
2021 was a tough year for transgender rights.

After learning to refine their attacks by taking aim at particularly vulnerable communities like transgender youth, our opposition covered the country with anti-trans bills, concentrated mainly in the areas of trans youth healthcare access and participation in school sports. We saw over 60 anti-transgender medical care bans introduced across the country. These bills differed slightly from state to state, but the main objective was to penalize medical providers for delivering gender-affirming care to minors.

A total of 12 anti-trans student athlete bans passed both legislative chambers in states, 4 of them were vetoed, and 9 of them were enacted. The anti-trans attacks are increasing, but we are rising to meet this challenge with more resources than ever. In 2021 we expanded our Advocacy & Civic Engagement team to provide more strategic support on legislative and organizing strategies and coordinated national partners’ response to on-the-ground needs. In December, Equality Federation moved $225,000 in grants to support lobbying efforts of our state partners who are facing anti-trans legislation in the 2022 legislative session.
We leveraged LGBTQ+ advocacy power to advance HIV Policy.

We work in close partnership with the individuals and organizations in the states who best understand HIV policy needs in each community. In 2021, we fostered partnerships and coalitions, provided a framework for peer-learning and support through best-practice messaging and advocacy training, and trained our entire membership on key HIV policy issues like the federal Ending the HIV Epidemic plan, criminalization, and access to prevention and care.

We worked closely with three state organizations — Transgender Education Network of Texas, Freedom Oklahoma, and PROMO (Missouri) — to support our them in building strong partnerships with HIV advocates to address a range of policy issues, based on the needs identified in communities including community engagement in the federal Ending the HIV Epidemic plan, Medicaid expansion, and criminalization. We also worked with partners in eight states (FL, GA, IL, MO, NJ, NV, OH, TN, and VA) that are actively working to modernize HIV criminalization laws.
We provided a strong connection between the LGBTQ+ movement and partners working to fight harmful preemption policies and strengthen local democracy.

We were well-positioned for this work thanks to our deep relationships with our network of 40+ state-based LGBTQ+ advocacy organizations and our role as the LGBTQ+ State Policy Group convener, a regular call for information sharing, and strategic coordination among national LGBTQ+ organizations to engage on state-level policy.
Since 2018, our Project Game Changer has prioritized building capacity for year-round organizing, base building, and civic engagement in the states.

Each cohort consists of a small group of state partners with whom we do deep work: providing peer learning opportunities, assisting in creating a plan, and providing coaching and training to support the execution of that plan.

Just one example of the success of this program: In a U.S. Senate runoff decided by just 54,944 votes, Georgia Equality’s non-partisan voter outreach program directly engaged 25,000 voters in conversations and reached more than a million by text and mail; this work was a critical part of Georgia’s overall progressive civic engagement strategy.
We worked to ensure LGBTQ+ older adults have access to critical services.

Working with SAGE, the world’s largest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ older people, and our state partners, we are mobilizing our national network to ensure that new provisions Older Americans Act (OAA) are implemented by state and local agencies to meet the needs of eligible LGBTQ+ older adults.

This includes training our entire network on the new requirements, providing state-level legislative support, fostering relationships between our members and State Units on Aging (SUAs) and Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), organizing our members and key SUAs and AAAs to help the federal government shape the regulations around LGBTQ+ outreach and data collection.
We believe that racial justice is a critical area for growth for many organizations and leaders, and strive to integrate a racial equity lens into all aspects of our work.

While statewide LGBTQ+ movement organizations have made significant strides on racial equity in recent years, there remains much work to be done. To meet this need, we’ve developed a Racial Justice Cohort, which launched in fall 2021, focusing on organizational development and racial justice.

Recognizing the barriers to change for many organizations lives at the board level, this initiative focuses on board development, creating a community of support, offering tools to support increasing racial justice within each organization, and providing structure for each organization to implement their desired change.
We use technology combined with our policy expertise to monitor important state legislation affecting LGBTQ+ Americans.

From anti-LGBTQ+ bills to bans on preemption, we are prepared to fight alongside our state partners and meet every new challenge head-on.

In 2021:

- 87% of the anti-LGBTQ+ bills Equality Federation tracked were defeated.
- At least 198 anti-trans bills were introduced.
- At least 392 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced.
- At least 921 pro-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced.
- 36 states had at least one anti-LGBTQ+ bill filed.
- 19 states passed anti-LGBTQ+ bills.
We appreciate the support of our donors.

$500,000
Anonymous Donor | Open Society Policy Center*

$250,000

$100,000
AARP Foundation | H. van Ameringen Foundation

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* indicates C4 donor
We appreciate the support of our donors.

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$1,000

* indicates C4 donor
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