

## Talking Points

# Equality Act

### The National Council of Jewish Women's (NCJW) Message

NCJW is committed to the enactment, enforcement, and preservation of laws and regulations that protect civil rights and individual liberties for all. The Equality Act (HR 5/S 788), introduced in March 2019 by Rep. David Cicilline (D-RI) and Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR), would ensure that people nationwide understand that discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people violates federal law by adding sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of identities protected under the Civil Rights Act. **Congress should pass the Equality Act to protect all individuals from discrimination regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.**

- **LGBTQ individuals face rampant discrimination.** A 2017 study by Harvard found that the majority of LGBTQ Americans have experienced harassment or discrimination due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Discrimination happens in in the spheres of employment, education, housing, public accommodations, and health care — every part of a person's life. LGBTQ people of color, immigrants, and those with disabilities face even more barriers and biases.
- **The Equality Act would add explicit protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity to our civil rights laws.** Though many federal courts have ruled that anti-LGBTQ discrimination is a form of sex discrimination that violates federal law, the administration is working to overturn these rulings and redefine federal sex discrimination through regulation. In the face of these efforts, Congress must confirm and make permanent these protections.
- **The Equality Act would update other gaps in existing civil rights laws.** The legislation would add a ban on discrimination based on sex to existing bans on race, color, religion, and national origin discrimination by businesses open to the public — also referred to as places of public accommodation. Further, the bill would expand the definition of public accommodations to include retail stores, online retailers, banks, transportation services, health care, and more. Thus if passed, the Equality Act would expand civil rights protections for everyone.