

September 22, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House

The Honorable Richard Neal
Chairman, House Committee on Ways & Means

The Honorable David Scott
Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture

The Honorable John Yarmuth
Chairman, House Committee on the Budget

The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Chairman, House Committee on Education &
Labor

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman, House Committee on Energy &
Commerce

The Honorable Maxine Waters
Chair, House Committee on Financial Services

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
Chairman, House Committee on Judiciary

The Honorable Jim McGovern
Chairman, House Committee on Rules

The Honorable Nydia Velázquez
Chair, House Committee on Small Business

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Chairman, House Committee on Transportation &
Infrastructure

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Chairman, Senate Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chair, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,
& Forestry

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
Chairman, Senate Committee on Banking,
Housing, and Urban Affairs

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chairman, Senate Committee on the Budget

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science,
& Transportation

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman, Senate Committee on Finance

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, & Pensions

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
Chair, Senate Committee on Rules &
Administration

The Honorable Ben Cardin
Chairman, Senate Committee on Small Business &
Entrepreneurship

Members of the U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, Committee Chairs and Members of Congress:

The National LGBTQ Anti-Poverty Action Network, and the 68 undersigned organizations committed to advancing equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) communities, are grateful for the critical provisions House committees put forward to lift individuals and families out of poverty in proposed Build Back Better legislation. Measures to secure access to inclusive paid leave, services to support LGBTQI+ older Americans, expand access to Medicaid, enact and enforce progressive tax policies, expand housing assistance for low-income renters and aspiring homeowners, and make the expanded refundable tax credits permanent are key to supporting the recovery of low-income LGBTQI+ people and families. We urge Congress to retain these measures put forward by House committees in final Build Back Better legislation.

LGBTQI+ people disproportionately experienced poverty before March 2020, and the pandemic has exacerbated this. According to the Williams Institute, 1 in 5 LGBTQI+ people and nearly 3 in 10 transgender people in the United States lived in poverty before the pandemic. Black and Brown LGBTQI+ people were even more likely to live in poverty: 3 in 10 Black LGBTQI+ people lived in poverty, including nearly 4 in 10 Black transgender people, as did more than 1 in 3 Latinx LGBTQI+ people, including nearly half of Latinx transgender people. Since the start of the pandemic, two-thirds of LGBTQI+ households have experienced a loss of employment—and two-thirds have suffered one or more serious financial problems. Research demonstrates that programs must explicitly target and include LGBTQI+ people in order to ensure the community is not left behind. Therefore, we urge you to support at least \$3.5 trillion in bold solutions in Build Back Better and ensure these policies and funding explicitly address the needs of, and explicitly set aside funding for data collection on, outreach to, direct services for, and research to assess equity in program participation of low- and middle-income LGBTQI+ people and families.

We urge you to further support the recovery of low-income LGBTQI+ people by including the following measures in Build Back Better:

- Investing in LGBTQI+ owned businesses in funding and programs to support small businesses. Congress should direct the Small Business Administration to create an office dedicated to identifying and supporting the needs of LGBTQI+-owned small businesses—particularly those whose owners are also members of other communities that are typically underinvested in, including women, people of color, transgender people, people with disabilities, and formerly incarcerated people.
- Investing in home and community-based services to support disabled and elderly LGBTQI+ individuals so they can get in-home aid and nutrition services to help them stay healthy in their homes, and ensuring that disabled and elderly LGBTQI+ people have equitable access to these services and benefits.
- Investing in LGBTQI+ workers by promoting LGBTQI+ competent and affirming training, policies, and procedures in workforce development programs, ensuring enforcement of employment nondiscrimination laws and other laws protecting the rights of LGBTQI+ people to collectively organize and stay safe at work, including by robustly funding the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Department of Labor, and National Labor Relations Board, to rebuild enforcement

capacity after years of flat funding and reductions that have too often left LGBTQI+ working people on their own to enforce their rights; and by strengthening unions, worker centers, and worker cooperatives, and investing in a subsidized jobs program. Congress should direct the Labor Department, Education Department, and other appropriate executive agencies to dedicate parts of this funding to provide technical assistance to evaluate and scale up LGBTQI+-focused workforce development programs, and promote LGBTQI+-competent and affirming training, policies, and procedures, with a special focus on voluntary workforce development programs that serve economically marginalized LGBTQI+ people. In a survey by the Center for American Progress, over half of transgender people report being out of work during the COVID-19 pandemic, and 68% report being discriminated against in employment over the past year. Congress should set aside funding for voluntary workforce development services that address the particular barriers that transgender people experience in entering, remaining in, and advancing in the workforce, including employment discrimination, and should fund research into promising workforce program models for transgender individuals and their outcomes.

- Passing into law the LGBTQI+-inclusive language in the [House Ways and Means Budget Reconciliation Legislative Recommendations Relating to Universal Paid Family and Medical Leave](#), including promoting equity based on sex, sexual orientation and gender identity (Subtitle A Sec. 130001 Title XII Sec. 2206 (a)); training to prevent discrimination including based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Sec. 2207 (b)(9)); research to ensure access to and detect and prevent disparities in benefit access including based on sex, sexual orientation and gender identity (Sec. 2208 (b)(1)) and reporting on disparities in accessing benefits and actions to prevent these disparities, including based on sex, sexual orientation and gender identity (Sec. 2208(b)(2)(D) and (E)).
- Expanding fair access to affordable housing for people with the lowest incomes, including rental assistance and homeownership down payment assistance for LGBTQI+ people and other underserved communities, including formerly incarcerated individuals and those with criminal records. To ensure Build Back Better adequately responds to the high level of housing instability faced by transgender people and LGBTQI+ older adults, funding should be directed to support community development projects led by transgender people and to support a two-year community planning project in partnership between local governmental agencies, members of the transgender community, and organizations serving LGBTQI+ older adults.
- Ensuring that every program funded under Build Back Better which is collecting demographic data to promote equity and access to services invests in expanding and enhancing data collection on sexual orientation and gender identity. Funding should also be allocated to test and implement intersex status data collection in federally funded surveys.
- Supporting unemployed people by reforming unemployment insurance to remove barriers to eligibility and improve payment durations and amounts, so a temporary stint of joblessness does not mean an immediate financial crisis for them and their families.
- Revitalizing Supplemental Security Income (SSI) by setting a maximum payment to at least the poverty line; raising or eliminating asset limits; eliminating the in-kind assistance provisions; and updating SSI income disregards to account for inflation.
- Ensuring a pathway to citizenship and access to benefits and work eligibility for immigrants and undocumented people.

Sincerely,

National LGBTQ Anti-Poverty Action Network and the following organizations:

National Organizations:

Bayard Rustin Liberation Initiative
A Better Balance
Black Women's Blueprint
Center for American Progress
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for LGBTQ Economic Advancement & Research (CLEAR)
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
Closing the Women's Wealth Gap
Coalition on Human Needs
Faith in Public Life
Family Equality
First Step Alliance
FORGE, Inc.
The Forum for Youth Investment
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality
The Global Justice Institute
GLSEN
Hispanic Federation
Impact Fund
interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth
Justice in Aging
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Movement Advancement Project
NASTAD
National Association of Social Workers
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR)
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Center on Adoption and Permanency
National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC)
National Council of Jewish Women
National Employment Law Project
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund

National Women's Law Center
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Pacific Community Ventures
PFLAG National
Positive Women's Network - USA
Prosperity Now
R2H Action [Right to Health]
RESULTS
Roanhorse Consulting
Time's Up Now
Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund
The Trevor Project
Union for Reform Judaism
United Today, Stronger Tomorrow
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Voices for Progress

State and Local Organizations:

AIDS Alabama	AL
Equality California	CA
Legal Aid at Work	CA
Oasis Legal Services	CA
Pacific Community Ventures	CA
The Center on Colfax	CO
Wanda Alston Foundation	DC
Georgia Equality	GA
Chicago Foundation for Women	IL
Equality Illinois	IL
Howard Brown Health	IL
Illinois Accountability Initiative	IL
Pride Community Services Organization	KY
Public Justice Center	MD
Results DC/MD	MD
Fostering Forward Michigan	MI
PROMO	MO
Mazzoni Center	PA