

Statement from Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (WA-07)
House Committee on Oversight and Reform
Full Committee Hearing
“The Rise of Anti-LGBTQI+ Extremism and Violence in the United States”
December 14, 2022

Too many of our LGBTQ+ community members live in fear of being the targets of violent hate crimes. Violence and terrorist threats against LGBTQ+ people have risen to such a level that on November 30, the Department of Homeland Security issued a National Terror Advisory warning Americans of increased terrorist activities targeting LGBTQ+ communities as well as religious and racial minorities.¹ Transgender people in particular, especially trans youth, have been targets of dehumanization, threats, and violence by the right wing.

Just one week ago, on December 7, a masked person shot into an LGBTQ+ venue in Renton, WA, not far from Seattle. Prior to this attack, threatening calls and social media posts had inundated the family- and pet-oriented taproom, which hosts a monthly Drag Queen Story Hour.² Despite this heinous act of vandalism and planned protests of the event, Brewmaster's Taproom held the event as planned, receiving a flood of support from allies in its community.³ Though thankfully no one was injured, this incident illustrates not just the pervasiveness of homophobic and transphobic extremism, but the resilience of LGBTQ+ people who refuse to hide their true selves, responding to hate by building robust, diverse communities.

My family experiences this fear personally. I am the proud mother of an incredible trans daughter, who—like so many in her community—is constantly on alert for threats to her safety and even her life. She has watched friends be beaten for simply being who they are. They cannot go to the mall or a movie theater or a club without wondering if they will be met with violence. Sadly, it is the very celebration of my daughter's and her friends' own identities that anti-LGBTQ+ attackers cannot bring themselves to abide with.

It is impossible to separate the increase in violence from the alarming agenda of extremist legislatures who seek to erase transgender people from public life. Nine states explicitly exclude gender affirming care from Medicaid coverage, stripping countless transgender people of access to affordable, life-saving medical care.⁴ Five states now limit or ban life-saving healthcare for youth, causing families to flee their home states to protect their children.⁵ Parents now feel forced to uproot their lives and move to different states for their children's safety. Meanwhile, some state lawmakers are pushing to restrict care even further, proposing to ban gender affirming healthcare for adults as old as 24.⁶

¹ Department of Homeland Security, *Summary of Terrorism Threat to the United States* (Nov. 30, 2022) <https://www.dhs.gov/ntas/advisory/national-terrorism-advisory-system-bulletin-november-30-2022>.

² Erica Zucco, Julie Calhoun, *Renton brewpub says it will hold monthly Drag Queen Story Hour despite harassment*, KING 5 (Dec. 9, 2022) <https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/drag-queen-story-hour-still-on-renton-brewpub-despite-harassment/281-f4d42e63-71f0-4e25-9d25-479ff616539a>.

³ Julie Calhoun, *Allies show up to support Renton taproom's monthly Drag Queen Story Hour*, KING 5 (Dec. 10, 2022) <https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/renton/allies-support-renton-taprooms-monthly-drag-queen-story-hour/281-9c5a57e9-acf8-4202-b62a-d1a9039f110d>.

⁴ Movement Advancement Project, *Healthcare Laws and Policies* (Oct. 25, 2022) https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/healthcare_laws_and_policies.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Brook Migdon, *Missouri lawmakers consider extending proposed ban on gender-affirming care to adults*, The Hill (Apr. 22, 2022) <https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/equality/3460403-missouri-lawmakers-consider-extending-proposed-ban-on-gender-affirming-care-to-adults/>.

The rhetoric used to pass these hateful laws is the same rhetoric that inspires domestic terrorists to carry out unspeakable acts of intimidation and violence. Boston Children’s Hospital has been evacuated three times this year in response to multiple bomb threats over their provision of gender affirming healthcare to trans youth.⁷ Children’s National Hospital in Washington, DC, has also been subjected to threatening calls and posts on social media advocating for violence—including one calling for the hospital’s physicians to be fed into a metal shredder.⁸

Meanwhile, advocates and allies that speak out face abhorrent abuse and threats to their safety. For example, online extremists forced Clara Sorrenti, a Canadian activist and transgender advocate, to flee her home after they published her address on a website called Kiwi Farms. When she flew to Northern Ireland to escape the resulting threats and harassment, forum users coordinated to track her down and called in bomb threats to nearby restaurants, hoping to find her.⁹ Unfortunately, Sorrenti is just one of many transgender activists targeted by extremists in an effort to silence them or even drive them to suicide.¹⁰

Despite these hateful actions, advocates and progressive lawmakers continue to champion trans rights. On September 30, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed a bill that will protect families fleeing states with anti-trans legislation from legal actions taken against them under those laws.¹¹ My home state of Washington has introduced its own bill based on this trailblazing legislation.¹² Of course, I am also extremely proud of my state for being one of the first in the nation to recognize marriage equality by popular vote in 2012.

At the federal level, Democrats in Congress have fought to make progress in the fight for LGBTQ+ rights. I am proud to have had the privilege of voting the Respect for Marriage Act into law and to have voted for the Equality Act. However, we can and must do more to protect LGBTQ+ people—especially transgender people. That is why I introduced H.Res.1209, the Transgender Bill of Rights, to lay out a comprehensive vision of a country where every trans person can live healthy, fulfilling lives while embracing their true selves. This resolution affirms that trans people have the same right to healthcare, public accommodations, credit, housing, and

⁷ Christopher Wiggins, *Children’s Hospital Target Of 3rd Bomb Threat Over Trans Care*, The Advocate (Nov. 18, 2022) <https://www.advocate.com/news/2022/11/18/childrens-hospital-target-3rd-bomb-threat-over-trans-care>.

⁸ Peter Jamison, *Children’s hospital threatened after Libs of TikTok recording on trans hysterectomies*, The Washington Post (Aug. 27, 2022) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/08/26/childrens-national-hospital-trans-hysterectomies/>.

⁹ Alex Hern, *How Kiwi Farms, the worst place on the web, was shut down*, The Guardian (Sep. 7, 2022) <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/sep/07/techscape-kiwi-farms-cloudflare>.

¹⁰ Odette Yousef, *A campaign made it harder to access an anti-trans website linked to multiple suicides*, National Public Radio (Sep. 12, 2022) <https://www.npr.org/2022/09/12/1122482174/a-campaign-made-it-harder-to-access-an-anti-trans-website-linked-to-multiple-sui>.

¹¹ Press release, *Senator Wiener’s Historic Bill to Provide Refuge for Trans Kids and Their Families Signed Into Law* (Nov. 30, 2022) <https://sd11.senate.ca.gov/news/20220930-senator-wiener%E2%80%99s-historic-bill-provide-refuge-trans-kids-and-their-families-signed-law>

¹² Victory Institute, *LGBTQ Lawmakers in 16 States to Introduce Trans Refuge State Laws; Will Shield Trans Kids from Penalties When Seeking Gender-Affirming Care* (May 3, 2022) <https://victoryinstitute.org/news/lgbtq-lawmakers-in-16-states-to-introduce-trans-refuge-state-laws-will-shield-trans-kids-from-penalties-when-seeking-gender-affirming-care/>.

opportunity as anyone else.¹³ But in order for trans people to truly live their lives with dignity, they must be able to simply exist.

Democrats in Congress will also continue to work with federal agencies to root out these extremist groups, prevent terror attacks on LGBTQ+ community, and hold those who commit them accountable.

My daughter is one of the bravest people I know, but she should not have to fear for her life every day. No one should face such terror just because they are living as their authentic selves. Nonetheless, I am inspired every day by the perseverance and the courage of so many in the LGBTQ+ community who, in the face of adversity, bring generosity, abundance, creativity and love to this world. As fierce allies, we will stand together with the LGBTQ+ community for justice and for equality. Together, we are stronger than hate.

¹³ Recognizing that it is the duty of the Federal Government to develop and implement a Transgender Bill of Rights to protect and codify the rights of transgender and nonbinary people under the law and ensure their access to medical care, shelter, safety, and economic security, H.Res.1209, 117th Cong. (2022). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-resolution/1209>