

Thank you, Chairman Nadler, Vice Chair Scanlon, Ranking Member Collins, and all Committee members for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of the Equality Act). I'm Rev. Jason Carson Wilson, founding executive director of Washington, D.C.-based Bayard Rustin Liberation Initiative, a domestic and international policy organization dedicated to angelic troublemaking for justice for people of color and LGBTQ+ people. BRLI is a member of the Faith & Equality Act Coalition, which includes more than 50 faith-based organizations. Ironically, the Equality Act would've protected our namesake, civil rights icon Bayard Rustin, from workplace discrimination. Rustin was driven from more than one position for being a gay man. Millions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Americans face varying forms of discrimination at work and elsewhere. Our Declaration of Independence said the creation of our nation would provide citizens the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. LGBTQ+ people have been denied that right—in the name of God. As a Black queer faith leader and theologian, let me be clear, using God to justify the systemic dehumanization and demoralization of LGBTQ+ Americans isn't just sinful—it's evil. Neither God nor Jesus ever discussed homosexuality or queerness in the Bible. And, sacred texts known as "lobber passages" were discussing ancient Jewish law, not Christian teachings. "The Bible says..." will never be a legitimate excuse for demonization and disenfranchisement of LGBTQ+ people by some Equality Act foes. According to HRC, about two-thirds of LGBTQ+ Americans reported experiencing discrimination. So, amending Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, and the Jury Selection and Services Act, which passing the Equality Act would accomplish, is vital. Kim Davis, former Rowan County, Ky. Clerk Kim Davis leaned on bankrupt theology to deny marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Bakers can refuse to make wedding cakes. There's movement at the state level to keep same-sex couples from adopting children. Employers can fire LGBTQ+ people for simply being who they are. LGBTQ+ people deserve all the rights and freedoms that every other American enjoys. So, I encourage you to support the Equality Act. All Americans deserve the right to life, liberty, equality, and the pursuit of happiness.