Social Science Research Supporting Passage of the Equality Act (H.R.5/S. 788)

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Why APA Supports the Equality Act
www.apa.org/advocacy/civil-rights/sexual-diversity/equality-act
BUSINESS

The Equality Act is Good for Business.

Workplaces that have implemented SGM-supportive policies have benefited from improved health outcomes among LGBT employees, as well as greater job commitment, satisfaction, and productivity.

OVERVIEW STUDIES

The following references are drawn from the Badgett et. al. 2013 study and elaborate on particular points:


TRANSGENDER SPECIFIC

IMPROVED HEALTH OUTCOMES


GREATER JOB COMMITMENT


**SATISFACTION**


**PRODUCTIVITY**


HEALTH

Equality Policy as Health Policy

Public health impact of discrimination and discriminatory public policies on SGMs

Stigma, prejudice and discrimination against sexual and gender minorities is pervasive widespread. Research shows that discriminatory policies are associated with increased stress levels, which result in harmful physical and mental health outcomes for sexual and gender minorities.

Civil rights and legal protections improve SGM health and well-being

Supportive policies, such as state non-discrimination laws, hate crimes protections, and marriage equality, that grant equal rights and legal protections to sexual and gender minorities are associated with decreased stress level which results in better health outcomes for sexual and gender minorities.

Supporting Research

A substantial body of research has shown the negative impacts of stress, including discrimination-related stress, on the physical and mental health of sexual and gender minority people and their families.


Discrimination, prejudice, and stigma produce social environments that are both stressful and hostile to minority individuals. The experience of living in these environments contributes to multiple health disparities for sexual and gender minorities including increased rates of mental and physical health disorders. (Minority Stress).


One study showed that following the implementation of state-level bans on marriage for same-sex couples, sexual minorities in these states experienced an increase in psychological and alcohol use disorders, including a 248% increase in Generalized Anxiety Disorder.

Another study emphasized the importance of supporting socially transitioning children, implying that the Department of Education’s decision to stop investigating complaints from transgender students who are barred from using restrooms consistent with their gender identity will likely lead to negative mental health outcomes for transgender students.


*Research finds that the presence of non-discrimination legislation and/or the adoption of equal rights legislation for sexual and gender minorities may have positive health impacts. Non-discrimination legislation which protects sexual and gender minorities is associated with better mental health, fewer medical care visits, and reduced healthcare costs.*


*Research finds that implementation of state policies permitting marriage for same-sex couples was associated with a 7% decrease in adolescent suicide attempts, and sexual and gender minorities living in states with policies protecting sexual minorities against workplace discrimination and hate crimes reported lower rates of psychological disorders.*


*Studies in the United States and Europe have also shown that when LGB people receive legal protections and other measures of improved social conditions, their health improves. For example, researchers assessed the impact of several laws protecting LGB people against discrimination based on sexual orientation in Sweden.*


**Additional research that demonstrates the favorable health effects of favorable public policy**


FAMILIES

PARTNERS, SPOUSES AND CHILDREN

Discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity affects not only the targeted individuals but their loved ones as well, including partners or spouses and any children they may have.

Research demonstrates that prejudice and discrimination can take a toll on relationships.


All types of couples experience more satisfaction in their relationships when they perceive greater social support.


Children benefit when their parents are financially secure, physically and psychologically healthy, and not subjected to high levels of stress.


FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTIONS

Scientific research provides no evidence that justifies discrimination against same-sex partners and their families as they attempt to adopt or foster children. Gay men and lesbians form stable, committed relationships that are equivalent to heterosexual relationships in essential respects. All children deserve loving family environments.

Of the 400,000 children in foster care in the United States, 100,000 are awaiting adoption; twenty-three thousand of these youth will age out of foster care without ever finding a permanent home.


Unfavorable legal climates can result in increases in depressive and anxious symptoms among same-sex couples as they attempt to transition into parenthood.

Scientific research provides no evidence that justifies discrimination against same-sex partners and their families as they attempt to adopt or foster children. Gay men and lesbians form stable, committed relationships that are equivalent to heterosexual relationships in essential respects. They generally have similar parenting approaches and are at least as old, at least as educated, and have at least as many economic resources as different-sex adoptive parents.


The vast majority of research finds that children raised by same-sex couples are indistinguishable in their psychological adjustment, emotional and physical health, and social functioning to children of heterosexual partners.


Family adjustment and functioning in adoptive families are not affected by parental sexual orientation. Adopted children of same-sex parents also show similar gains in cognitive development and experience school adjustment and educational progress comparable to adopted children of different sex parents.


A small body of research offers no indication that transitioning has any effect on parenting abilities, or that children of transgender parents suffer long-term negative impacts directly related to parental gender change.


March 20, 2019

The Honorable David N. Cicilline  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Cicilline:

On behalf of the 118,400 members and affiliates of the American Psychological Association (APA), I am writing to thank you for your introduction of H.R. 5: the Equality Act.

APA is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world’s largest association of psychologists. We have a longstanding commitment to ending discriminatory practices based on sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity). Most notably, in, 2007 APA adopted a resolution on “Opposing Discriminatory Legislation and Initiatives Aimed at Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Persons”, and in 2008 a policy statement on “Transgender, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression Non-Discrimination.”

The Equality Act would amend existing civil rights law to explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity) at work, in places of public accommodation, housing, credit, education, jury service, and in programs and facilities that receive federal funding. It would protect people who associate with sexual and gender minorities (such as their children) from discrimination and would extend provisions banning sex-based discrimination to public accommodations and with federal funding. Additionally, the Equality Act expands the facilities termed public accommodations, ensuring comprehensive non-discrimination protections in all areas of society.

The Equality Act is necessary because discrimination based on sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity) remains a grave problem across the United States. In addition to the obvious harms of discrimination – such as not being able to find a job or housing – associated stress, which can stem from unjust policies, may negatively impact the health and wellbeing of sexual and gender minorities (SGMs). For example, following the implementation of state-level bans on marriage for same-sex couples, sexual minorities in theses states experienced an increase in psychological and alcohol use disorders, including a 248% increase in Generalized Anxiety Disorder. In contrast, the 2015 decision recognizing the freedom to marry nationally was followed by reduced mental distress and improved life satisfaction among lesbian couples, the implementation of state policies permitting marriage for same-sex couples was associated with a 7% decrease in adolescent suicide attempts, and SGMs living in states with policies protecting sexual minorities against workplace discrimination and hate crimes reported lower rates of psychological disorders.