



Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity

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VIA EMAIL

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[Woodhull Freedom Foundation](#) and [Equality New York](#) jointly submit this response to the United Nations Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity (IE SOGI)'s [call for input to the thematic report to HRC62: Violence and discrimination experienced by lesbian, bisexual, and queer \(LBQ\) women](#).

Woodhull Freedom Foundation's mission is to affirm sexual freedom as a fundamental human right. Woodhull envisions a world that recognizes sexual freedom as the fundamental human right of all individuals to develop and express their unique sexuality; to be personally autonomous with regard to bodily integrity and expression; and to enjoy sexual dignity, privacy, and consensual sexual expression without societal or governmental interference, coercion, or stigmatization.

Equality New York (EQNY) is a grassroots advocacy organization that advances the lives of all LGBTQI+ New Yorkers and their families. EQNY works towards advancing equality and justice for all New Yorkers and their families, by using an ecological lens for implementing all policies, programs, and projects. EQNY believes all LGBTQI+ communities deserve an efficient and effective statewide voice to consistently build good relationships with the government and hold our elected officials accountable.

As civil society organizations in the United States focused on sexual freedom and LGBTQIA+ rights, protections against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity are critical to our work. We therefore recognize our expertise is necessary to inform this call for input from the UN Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity. The focus of this report on violence and discrimination experienced by lesbian, bisexual, and queer women is particularly timely as we see increased attacks against LBQ women throughout the United States under the second Trump administration. We also welcome the inclusivity of this report, which recognizes that LBQ identities encompass a diverse range of experiences, including those of transgender women who identify as lesbian or bisexual, and/or queer.

In answering the IE SOGI's questions in this call for input, we include both our organizations' publications and analyses on laws and regulations affecting LBQ women, research findings, and recommendations informed by community expertise. Our input includes assessments of issues

affecting LBQ women throughout the United States, with a state focus on New York, where EQNY is based, and where Woodhull conducts a significant portion of its policy advocacy.

In answering several of these questions, we reference EQNY's 2025 LGBTQ+ Statewide and National Policy Platform, which we include as a PDF attachment to this submission. The priorities of EQNY's policy platform are reflective of both EQNY and Woodhull's mission to defend and advance LGBTQI+ rights both nationwide and in New York. These priorities are organized into the following categories:

- Bodily Autonomy & Reproductive Justice
- Disability Justice, Physical & Mental Health
- Racial Justice
- Transgender, Gender Non-Conforming, Non-Binary, & Intersex Equity
- Youth, Families & Aging Communities

Primary questions

1. Has your government, your organization, or you as an individual identified significant challenges, barriers or forms of violence and discrimination impacting LBQ women?

Woodhull and EQNY recognize the extreme threat the second Trump administration poses to LBQ women throughout the United States. In the lead up to President Trump taking office in January 2025, Woodhull held an online forum, "[LGBTQIA+ Rights & Sexual Freedom Under Siege: What to Expect under Trump 2.0](#)," during which Ricci Levy, President & CEO of the Woodhull Freedom Foundation, and Diana Adams, Esq., Founder of Diana Adams Law and Mediation and the Chosen Family Law Center, had a crucial discussion on the future of LGBTQIA+ rights and sexual freedom. They examined the potential impact on landmark SCOTUS decisions (Lawrence v. Texas and US v. Windsor), explored the real threats to LGBTQIA+ protections, and offered insights into how families and individuals can prepare for the challenges under a second Trump administration.

Once President Trump came into office, his administration immediately launched an assault against the LGBTQIA+ community. Woodhull documented the relentless attacks in the blog post, "[Trump's First 100 Days: A Brutal Assault on Human Rights and Sexual Freedom – And Woodhull Won't Back Down](#)." In the blog post, Woodhull also documented state-level efforts to rollback human rights protections, which directly threatened the health and safety of LBQ women. We highlight here Woodhull's efforts to oppose a slate of alarming bills introduced in Oklahoma, which would have directly harmed and discriminated against LBQ women by banning abortions, banning no-fault divorces, and creating state tax credits for "covenant marriages." While the Oklahoma legislature did not pass these bills in 2025, we remain alarmed at the erosion of protections for LBQ women at the state and local level.

Woodhull and EQNY anticipate that legislatures throughout the United States will continue to introduce bills aimed at eroding the rights and safety of LBQ women in 2026. We remain committed to opposing such legislation while advocating for bills that protect the rights of LBQ women. This is particularly critical as the Trump administration continues to target the LGBTQIA+ community at the federal level.

2. What systemic factors (economic, social, cultural, political, and civil) contribute to these challenges? Have these challenges led to greater violence and/or discrimination against LBQ women?

EQNY and Woodhull are committed to defending freedom of expression online and have opposed ongoing threats from widespread censorship of LGBTQIA+ voices online. We recognize this discrimination as an assault due to systemic social, cultural, political, and economic factors. Online censorship is a result of policies from private technology companies and legislative efforts to minimize free and fair access to digital spaces for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Both EQNY and Woodhull have challenged federal legislative efforts to pass laws that would erode free speech online. In [media reporting on the Kids Online Safety Act](#) (KOSA), EQNY Executive Director Amanda Babine expressed concern that, if passed, this legislation could lead social media platforms or policymakers to interpret LGBTQIA+ content as inappropriate for children. Babine expressed that if legislation like KOSA becomes law, young LGBTQIA+ people will not be able to access crucial and potentially life-saving information online.

Woodhull has similarly addressed the harms that come from widespread censorship of sexual expression, including specific harms to LBQ women. In a panel discussion convened by Woodhull, "[The Byte Barrier: How Algorithms Are Silencing Our Sexual Voices](#)" expert panelists discussed the impact of algorithmic control on marginalized communities, the challenges faced by educators and activists, and potential pathways to advocate for more transparent, context-aware content moderation policies that respect users' rights to comprehensive, safe, and inclusive sexual health resources.

Beyond digital spaces, EQNY and Woodhull have confronted censorship in schools and the harms posed to LBQ women and girls. In the Woodhull panel discussion, "[Unwritten Harm: The Mental Health Impact of Censorship on Sexual Freedom](#)," panelists explored how book bans deprive LGBTQ+ individuals—especially queer youth—of critical resources that promote self-understanding, emotional resilience, and sexual freedom. The panelists also discussed the mental health consequences of censorship, highlighting how the erasure of diverse sexualities and gender identities can contribute to feelings of isolation, shame, and anxiety.

EQNY has supported legislation to end censorship in schools, as reported in the article, "[Education advocates urge Hochul to sign bill aimed at combating censorship in](#)

[schools](#).” Throughout 2025, EQNY advocated for the [Freedom to Read Act](#), which would have ensured that librarians across New York could develop diverse book collections to fight censorship in schools. In describing the issue of censorship in schools, EQNY Executive Director Amanda Babine explained it is not only an issue in conservative states in the US, “One of the things we've been talking about and one of our kind of slogans is this is not a red state issue. We've had censorship here in New York State. Often, people think New York is very, very liberal. The city is often very liberal but, you know, we've seen book bans on Long Island over the last few years. We've seen them up in the North Country. So, they're happening, and so our worry is that young people will no longer have access to those books and literature.”

New York Governor Kathy Hochul vetoed the Freedom to Read Act, but Woodhull and EQNY remain committed to its reintroduction and passage. Censorship in schools directly harms the social, emotional, and mental development and well-being of LBQ girls. Ensuring access to inclusive literature fosters self-affirmation, supports mental health, and empowers individuals to live authentically. Providing well-rounded educational environments that accurately address topics related to sexuality and gender is critical to protecting all children’s right to an education. This is also crucial to creating and fostering a society that values and protects the health, rights, and safety of LBQ women.

Intersectional experiences

3. How does race, ethnicity, class, age, disability, immigration status, gender identity, religion, or other factors intersect with LBQ identities to shape experiences of violence and discrimination?

EQNY and Woodhull engage an intersectional approach to issues related to LGBTQIA+ rights and sexual freedom. We recognize that race, ethnicity, class, age, disability, immigration status, and gender identity all impact and shape LBQ women’s experiences of violence and discrimination. We highlight here EQNY’s 2025 policy platform, which focuses on advancing LGBTQIA+ rights by realizing disability justice, racial justice, bodily autonomy and reproductive justice, and transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary, and intersex equity. These policy initiatives are also reflective of the key issues guiding Woodhull’s work.

Within the United States context, we also draw particular attention to the violent government oppression of LBQ women who have various forms of immigration status. At the beginning of 2026, [Woodhull submitted comments to the US Department of Homeland Security](#) on a proposed rule regarding the collection and use of biometrics by US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). In the comment, Woodhull expressed extreme concern at the security threat the proposed rule poses to transgender, non-binary, and gender expansive individuals.

The proposed rule would, "...grant DHS express authority to require, request, or accept raw DNA or DNA test results (which include a partial DNA profile) from relevant parties such as applicants, petitioners, derivatives, dependents, and beneficiaries, to prove...biological sex." Woodhull expressed alarm at the prospect of the US federal government maintaining a vast database of immigrants' DNA, including that of children, to "prove biological sex." Throughout both of President Trump's administrations, he has used his authority to relentlessly attack transgender, non-binary, and gender expansive individuals. If this rule goes into effect, both Woodhull and EQNY are deeply concerned about how transgender, non-binary, and gender expansive LBQ migrants' biometric data may be used to deny them due process in immigration proceedings. In question 5 below, we further address how gender specifically impacts the experiences of people with diverse gender identities who identify as LBQ.

4. Are there particular groups of LBQ women who face heightened risks or specific forms of targeting?

Woodhull and EQNY are committed to defending and protecting the rights of LBQ women who do sex work. Sex workers represent an extremely marginalized community in New York and throughout the United States. LBQ women who do sex work also face heightened risks due to their gender identity and sexuality. Many forms of sex work remain criminalized throughout the US, which exposes sex workers to police violence and incarceration. We highlight here Woodhull's publication "Fact Checked by Woodhull: [Sex Worker Rights are Human Rights.](#)"

Both Woodhull and EQNY [advocated for the bill](#) "Immunity from Prosecution for Sex Workers and Survivors of Trafficking," which the NY State legislature passed and Governor Hochul signed into law at the end of 2025. While we welcome the implementation of this bill in 2026, we continue to fight for the [full decriminalization of sex work](#), which is critical to protecting the health, rights, and safety of all sex workers, including LBQ women who do this work. We also advocate for specific protections that address disproportionate harms perpetrated against sex workers in different sectors of the sex industry. This includes Woodhull's efforts to oppose undue licensing burdens on [massage workers in New York City](#). Asian immigrant women make up a large portion of massage workers in the city and face disproportionate financial, criminalization, and deportation risks through burdensome licensing requirements.

5. In what ways does gender impact the experiences of people with diverse gender identities who identify as LBQ, including transgender women?

Woodhull and EQNY have relentlessly confronted the cruel assault against transgender individuals in the United States. The Trump administration and state lawmakers are carrying out targeted attacks against transgender, non-binary, and gender expansive individuals throughout the country. The danger to these individuals is so grave that in January 2026, the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention and Human Security

released a warning that [the US is in the early stages of a genocide against transgender people in the country](#).

As a PDF attachment to this submission, we include the New York Transgender Advocacy Group's report, "Dismantling Stigma in the Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Community", which EQNY Executive Director Amanda Babine co-authored. This report addresses gaps in research related to the needs of the trans and gender nonconforming community using the Social-Ecological Model and to examine experiences of stigma in their daily lives. We also include here an Op-Ed co-authored by Babine, "[New York will defend transgender and non-binary bathroom rights – unlike Congress](#)." In this piece, Babine highlights some of the unique forms of violence and discrimination perpetrated against transgender and non-binary individuals, including in accessing public bathrooms.

Woodhull has also written extensively on issues impacting people with diverse gender identities, including LBQ women. Woodhull published two deeply researched pieces as part of their Fact Checked by Woodhull series, "[Sex and Gender Are Not The Same](#)" and "[Transgender People Are Not a Threat to Public Safety](#)." Woodhull has addressed the assault on gender affirming healthcare in the blog post, "[Trans Health Care Under Trump](#)," and by responding directly to the [US Federal Trade Commission's public inquiry on gender-affirming healthcare](#). Also at the federal level, [Woodhull monitors Supreme Court cases](#) that will directly impact the rights of transgender people across the country. This includes two cases heard in early January 2026 related to transgender women and girls rights to play on their schools' sports teams. In New York, Woodhull has also opposed [the destruction of gender-affirming healthcare for NYC trans youth](#) while [calling on the NY Governor to protect trans and gender non-conforming New Yorkers](#).

Structural and legal issues

6. How do LBQ women experience interactions with police, courts, healthcare systems, schools, or other institutions?

EQNY and Woodhull address LBQ women's experiences interacting with police, courts, healthcare systems, schools, and other institutions and have detailed some of this work in earlier questions relating to censorship online and in educational settings, efforts to ban gender-affirming healthcare, and harms of criminalizing sex work, all of which directly impact violence and discrimination inflicted against LBQ women. To expand on this, we provide two reports from Woodhull's Fact Checked series: "[Law Enforcement Does Not Make Sex Workers Safer](#)" and "[Criminalizing Sex Work Does Not Improve Safety or Public Health](#)". Here we also present findings from the 2021 report, "[Banning the Use of Gay and Trans Panic Defenses](#)." This report addresses the harms caused by the use of gay and trans panic defenses in court and how this impacts violence against LGBTQ people in the US. The report provides crucial data to inform this call for input, including that related to the disproportionately high rates of sexual assault and intimate

partner violence inflicted against bisexual women compared to lesbian and heterosexual women.