



# North Carolina Hospitals Stand Up for LGBTQ Equality

## WE HAVE SEEN TREMENDOUS PROGRESS

toward LGBTQ equality over the past decade, yet LGBTQ Americans still lack federal civil rights protections. Without these protections, we are left with a patchwork of state and municipal laws that leave many LGBTQ people vulnerable to discrimination in their workplaces, healthcare facilities, schools and communities. This is why the HRC Foundation produces programs like the HEI that promote LGBTQ-inclusive policies and practices in the institutions that impact people's everyday lives. This work is most important in states and communities that lack non-discrimination protections for their LGBTQ citizens and those that have passed anti-LGBTQ legislation that seeks to take away rights and legislate discrimination.

Last year, North Carolina's legislature and former Governor Pat McCrory passed a reckless and extreme law known as House Bill 2 (HB2) that thrust the state into the epicenter of the debate surrounding LGBTQ non-discrimination protections. HB2 eliminated all existing municipal non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people and banned any communities from passing such provisions in the future. The most well-known provision of the law prevents all transgender people — children and adults — from using restrooms and other facilities consistent with their gender identity in any government-owned buildings.

North Carolina is facing enormous backlash from its citizens and advocates nationwide for rescinding protections for LGBTQ people and attacking the rights of transgender people. The passage

of HB2 caused significant damage to North Carolina's reputation and economy: Companies scrapped plans to expand in the state, promoters cancelled or moved major conventions, professional sports leagues and artists pulled games and concerts out of the state, and tourism dropped. More than 200 major CEOs and business leaders, including many from North Carolina's largest employers, signed an open letter calling for repeal of HB2.

Hospitals and healthcare systems in North Carolina fought back. Many reassured their employees of their commitment to LGBTQ diversity and inclusion, and some spoke out publicly against HB2. Duke University, a longtime participant in the HEI and a Leader in LGBTQ Healthcare Equality, called for repeal (see accompanying statement). Throughout this controversy, several hospitals in North Carolina made a commitment to LGBTQ inclusion by participating in the HEI for the first time, and many of them achieved the Leader in LGBTQ Healthcare Equality designation. This year, 28 hospitals in North Carolina participated in the HEI, and 22 of them earned the Leader designation, placing North Carolina third nationwide in the number of Leaders, behind California and New York.

There is still much work to do in North Carolina to repeal HB2 and advance LGBTQ equality, but thanks to these hospitals, many more LGBTQ North Carolinians have a safe place to seek hospital care when they need it.



Duke University is committed to fostering an open, welcoming, inclusive community that respects each individual. We remain steadfast in our policies of nondiscrimination and inclusion for all of our students, faculty, staff, alumni, patients, fans and visitors.

We deplore in the strongest possible terms the new state law, HB2, that prevents municipalities from establishing laws that protect members of the LGBTQ+ community and others from discrimination and eliminates some economic advancement opportunities for underrepresented communities.

As a result of this law, North Carolina has already suffered damage to its national and international reputation as a leader in the fair treatment of its citizens. The economic and material impact is being felt across the state in many ways, including at universities. Scholars from states and municipalities that have imposed bans on government travel to North Carolina have been unable to travel to Duke to continue vital ongoing research partnerships or attend academic conferences. Prospective students, faculty and staff, as well as Duke alumni planning visits to campus, have voiced concerns about whether they will find a hospitable environment in North Carolina. These developments have the potential to limit the value that Duke and other colleges and universities contribute to the state, namely producing trained graduates and expanding the frontiers of knowledge.

We extend our concern and support to those who have been most directly affected — the members of Duke's LGBTQ+ community. We encourage anyone needing assistance to turn to the many support services that Duke offers.

In spirit and in letter, this new law runs counter to the ideals of Duke University — and, we believe, to those of our great state. We urge a full repeal of HB2.

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