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The LGBT Data Inclusion Act of 2016

The *LGBT Data Inclusion Act* was introduced May 29, 2016 with 68 original co-sponsors and was endorsed by the Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus and 19 prominent civil rights groups, including:

Center for American Progress, Williams Institute, Human Rights Campaign, National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund, National Center for Transgender Equality, True Colors Fund, Transgender Law Center, National Center for Lesbian Rights, GLSEN, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders, National Black Justice Coalition, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, National Women's Law Center, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Anti-Defamation League, The Trevor Project, National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, New York City Anti-Violence Project, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

BACKGROUND

Collection of data and demographic information is critical to the government's understanding of various communities, as well as the efficacy of services and programs aimed at addressing communities' needs. While government agencies routinely collect data on a wide variety of demographic groups, LGBT people are generally invisible in federal surveys. Studies show LGBT people face significant disparities in nearly all aspects of life, from employment and healthcare to homelessness. Without an accurate assessment of these disparities, the government cannot adequately address them.

THE LGBT DATA INCLUSION ACT

The *LGBT Data Inclusion Act of 2016* is a vital and necessary bill that would require uniformity amongst all federal agencies to collect data on sexual orientation and gender identity. While some federal data on the LGBT community is currently collected, there is no centralized requirement in law ensuring that federal data collection on the LGBT community be a priority.

The current lack of population-based data on the LGBT community inhibits the creation of sound public policy as well as the delivery of effective programs and services to all who live in this country. Expanding and improving data collection and analysis about LGBT people is essential to better understanding the issues affecting our communities and to improve the health and well-being of all of our families. The lack of data on sexual orientation and gender identity puts policymakers in unknown territory as they craft policies that have the potential to significantly affect the lives and wellbeing of LGBT people and their families.

This bill would apply to federal surveys that currently include demographic data, information about the race or ethnicity, sex, and age of a survey participant through self-reported information or proxy reporting by a head of household, such as the Census. In addition, this bill includes the implementation of a process for federal agencies to routinely assess changes needed in the collection of this data. This will provide enough flexibility for federal agencies to use the most effective data collection methods and improve its measurement.

The addition of voluntary, self-disclosed information on sexual orientation and gender identity to our federal surveys will bring us to the 21st century in knowing the make-up of our population.