

WHAT DOES THE EQUALITY ACT MEAN FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR?

Increased protections in public spaces and services

- In addition to the places of public accommodation like restaurants and hotels already included in the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Equality Act updates the law to ensure that other important providers of goods and services like retail stores, accountants, and salons do not discriminate on the basis of any protected characteristic. Transportation providers including trains, taxis, and airlines are also included within the Equality Act.
- People of color continue to face persistent discrimination on a daily basis in stores, salons, and in accessing transportation including car services and taxis. The Equality Act would make this discrimination illegal.
- Whether denied service or experiencing unfair treatment or harassment, this discrimination impedes individuals from fully participating in social and public spaces. Updating the law will ensure that no one is denied the ability to fully participate in social and public spaces just because of who they are.

Protection from discrimination on the basis of “actual or perceived” membership in a protected class

- The Equality Act’s coverage of perceived membership of a protected class is consistent with civil rights laws in many states, which acknowledge that an employer, landlord, or business owner’s perception – rather than the individual’s actual identity – can be just as relevant in assessing illegal discrimination.
- Without these protections, employers have successfully defended Title VII charges of discrimination because the individual was not actually a member of a protected class. This leaves many individuals who experience discrimination with little recourse.

Protection from discrimination based on association with a member of a protected class

- Like the Fair Housing Amendments Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibit discrimination against those who associate with people with disabilities, the Equality Act prohibits discrimination against people who associate with members of a protected class under the act including people of color. These protections extend to every section of the bill including public services like transportation and public spaces like retail stores.

EQUALITY ACT