



Municipal Equality Index

A NATIONWIDE EVALUATION OF MUNICIPAL LAW

2019



Frequently Asked Questions

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CITIES RATED?

This booklet contains only a summary of the scorecards for each of the 506 cities rated on the 2018 MEI. The full scorecards are available online at www.hrc.org/mei.

HOW WERE THESE CITIES CHOSEN?

This year, the cities rated are: the 50 state capitals, the 200 largest cities in the United States, the five largest cities or municipalities in each state, the cities home to the state's two largest public universities (including undergraduate and graduate enrollment), 75 cities & municipalities that have high proportions of same-sex couples (see page 19 for more information) and 98 cities selected by HRC and Equality Federation state groups members and supporters.

WHY ISN'T WASHINGTON, D.C. RATED?

For an explanation as to why Washington, D.C. is not included in the MEI, please see page 19.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ISN'T A CITY?

Yes. A few of the places rated in the MEI are "census-designated places" which are not incorporated as cities. In that case, we rated the local incorporated government that actually serves that census-designated place, which is usually the county. This is explained further on page 19.

HOW ARE THE SCORES CALCULATED?

Cities are rated on a scale of 0-100, based on the city's laws, policies, benefits, and services. There are 100 standard points and 22 bonus points (bonus points are awarded for items which apply to some but not all cities). For more information on the scoring system, see pages 23-24 and 30-33.

WHERE DID THE INFORMATION FOR THESE SCORES COME FROM?

The MEI team conducted the research, compiled it into a draft scorecard, and sent the draft scorecard to the city for review. Cities had an opportunity to review

the draft scorecard and offer any feedback prior to publication.

CAN ONLY CITIES IN STATES WITH GOOD LAWS GET GOOD SCORES?

Definitely not. The MEI was specifically designed to measure the laws and policies of the municipality, not the state. While state law might add to a city's score, positive state law is not necessary for a city to score 100 points. In fact, 34 cities in states without statewide non-discrimination laws for LGBTQ people scored 100 points in 2018.

IS THIS A RANKING OF THE BEST CITIES FOR LGBTQ PEOPLE TO LIVE IN?

No. This is not a ranking of a city's atmosphere or quality of life. It is an evaluation of the city's law and policies, and an examination of how inclusive city services are of LGBTQ people. Some high-scoring cities may not feel truly welcoming for all LGBTQ people, and some low-scoring cities may feel more welcoming than their policies might reflect.

Research Process

The information reflected in this publication was gathered by the MEI team and compiled into draft scorecards using publicly available information. Cities were then offered an opportunity to review the scorecards, ask any questions, and submit any additional information they wished the MEI

team to consider. Our team sent out a letter in March to mayors and city managers notifying them that their cities were being rated by email and certified mail, followed by a draft scorecard sent to the mayors and city managers in June also via email and certified mail. The feedback window lasted four

weeks. Finally, cities were sent their final scorecards and information about the MEI 2019 in the same way. Equality Federation state groups also were able to review the scorecards and provide feedback to the MEI team prior to publication.

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AN INTRODUCTION

Dear Friends



This year, our community and our country have realized historic progress, even as the health, rights and welfare of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face relentless attacks from the highest levels of government. For the first time, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation to provide comprehensive civil rights protections for our community — the Equality Act. This was a major step forward on the road to full equality, but we still need action in the U.S. Senate to make the Equality Act law. Further, there remains so much more work to be done to protect and empower LGBTQ Americans. Fortunately, many local officials in cities and towns across America are leading that work forward as they strive to build communities that are inclusive and welcoming to all.

This year's Municipal Equality Index (MEI) lays out in vivid detail how municipalities are stepping up for fairness and equality by protecting LGBTQ residents and visitors. Eighty-eight cities earned a perfect score this year — the most in the MEI's history. From coast to coast, and in every corner of our country, local leaders

are moving our community closer to full equality — from Richmond, Virginia to Anchorage, Alaska, from Norman, Oklahoma, to State College, Pennsylvania. These local leaders also understand that to advance LGBTQ rights, they have to make sure that their own employment practices and policies are progressive and equitable. A record-breaking 164 out of the 506 cities we scored now offer transgender-inclusive health benefits to city employees.

While this progress is critical, more action is needed from local leaders to protect the health and welfare of their LGBTQ constituents, especially those who hold multiple, marginalized identities. The prevalence of HIV among LGBTQ communities of color constitutes a major health disparity and a serious health crisis. One in two gay or bisexual Black men will contract HIV during their lifetime. More than half of Black transgender women are living with HIV — members of our community who are already facing a terrible epidemic of violence. As this report makes clear, cities and towns have a real opportunity to address a severe health injustice by making safe and effective HIV prevention tools like PrEP more accessible to those who are most at risk.

The MEI also underscores the critical importance of LGBTQ liaisons as vital connectors between LGBTQ people and their community's town hall or police department. All too often, a lack of expertise and cultural competence means that the needs of LGBTQ people remain invisible to leadership, and serious issues facing LGBTQ people remain inadequately or improperly addressed. A liaison can help build trust, clarity, and

communication to help a municipality address everything from everyday concerns to urgent crises.

As we look at ways for cities and towns to make further progress, we also celebrate the amazing work that is being done right now to make cities and towns better, more equitable places to live and visit. And this work is not going unnoticed by our country's leading businesses. Both companies and municipalities understand that embracing equality is not only the right thing to do — it also helps businesses and economies thrive. The MEI therefore serves not only as a guide for ways that city leaders can further equality, but also as a resource for companies looking to expand into places that are actively fostering inclusion.

This work to advance equality would not be possible without our partners at the Equality Federation Institute and statewide LGBTQ organizations who continue to fight fiercely to uplift and empower LGBTQ people in their states.

Together, in unity, we will continue to move our community and our nation forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AWD', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

ALPHONSO DAVID
President

Human Rights Campaign Foundation

Dear Readers



The Municipal Equality Index gives us a bird's eye view of protections LGBTQ people have in the communities they call home and we are pleased to partner with HRC on this annual review of our progress. Equality Federation works with state leaders to help communities move toward full equality. We intend for this report to educate and inspire change so that next year is even better.

This report on the local landscape couldn't be more timely. Progress made by the 88 municipalities with perfect scores -- more than any other year -- creates momentum for other

communities to make progress and for passage of the federal Equality Act. Twenty-five million people live in cities that have non-discrimination protections for transgender residents at the local level alone. Last November, with our partners' help, our members were successful in upholding transgender equality at the ballot box in Massachusetts and Alaska. Although there is much work to do, we've turned a corner in the way trans people are treated in this country. Gone are the days when disrespect goes unnoticed and unchecked. LGBTQ people have proven time and time again that we have a voice and will use it to protect and defend each person in our community.

Continued progress is on the horizon and this report is helpful in achieving it. Equality Federation will be here to help advance the movement every step of the way, as will our member groups like Equality North Carolina which just celebrated 40 years of fighting for equality. We continue to partner with our state equality groups to increase their strength and build their

leadership. Coming off of our annual Leadership conference in Louisville, KY, state leaders are gearing up for an intense 2020 legislative session.

We stand with previously underserved members of our movement. Transgender Americans, people of color, and residents of rural communities have too often been left behind as other segments of our community have progressed. Equality Federation and our 42 member organizations won't rest until there is full equality for all LGBTQ people. We hope the elected officials and community advocates reading this report will do the same.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Isaacs".

REBECCA ISAACS
Executive Director

Equality Federation Institute

Continued progress is on the horizon
and this report is helpful in achieving it.

Inclusivity Drives Economic Growth

Ensuring that all city residents, workers, and visitors are protected from discrimination is not just the right thing to do.

Full inclusivity drives economic growth.

Cities are in constant competition for residents, visitors, employees, and businesses. A demonstrated commitment to equality through laws and policies that protect everyone, including LGBTQ people, sends a clear message that all residents, visitors, workers, and businesses are welcome and valued. Inclusive non-discrimination laws give cities a competitive edge.

A growing body of research shows that openness to diversity and inclusiveness is not a byproduct of communities that achieve economic prosperity, but rather

a key element in the formula that leads to economic growth.¹

The Fortune 500 has long utilized inclusive workplace policies as proven recruitment and retention tools. Diversity and inclusion enhance an employer's reputation, increase job satisfaction, and boost employee morale. Municipalities and their employees similarly benefit from LGBTQ-inclusive workplace policies and practices.

What's more, businesses actively take into account local laws and policies when making decisions about cities in which to headquarter, relocate, or expand. In fact, the nation's top businesses are becoming increasingly vocal in their support for laws and policies that protect all of their

employees and their families at home, in the workplace, and in their communities. Earlier this year, for instance, more than 200 leading businesses came out in support of comprehensive federal non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people.²

Until full nationwide equality is realized, cities must continue to lead the way on vital protections for LGBTQ residents, visitors, and workers. In doing so, city leaders will help ensure the health, safety, and well-being of all residents while encouraging real economic growth that benefits everyone.



¹ Florida, Richard, *The Geography of Tolerance*, available at <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2012/07/geography-tolerance/2241/> (last accessed Oct. 9, 2019).

² *HRC Announces Unprecedented Support for the Equality Act from 200+ Leading Businesses*, Human Rights Campaign, available at <https://www.hrc.org/blog/hrc-announces-unprecedented-business-support-for-the-equality-act> (last accessed Oct. 9, 2019).



Until full nationwide equality is realized, cities must continue to lead the way on vital protections for LGBTQ residents, visitors, and workers.





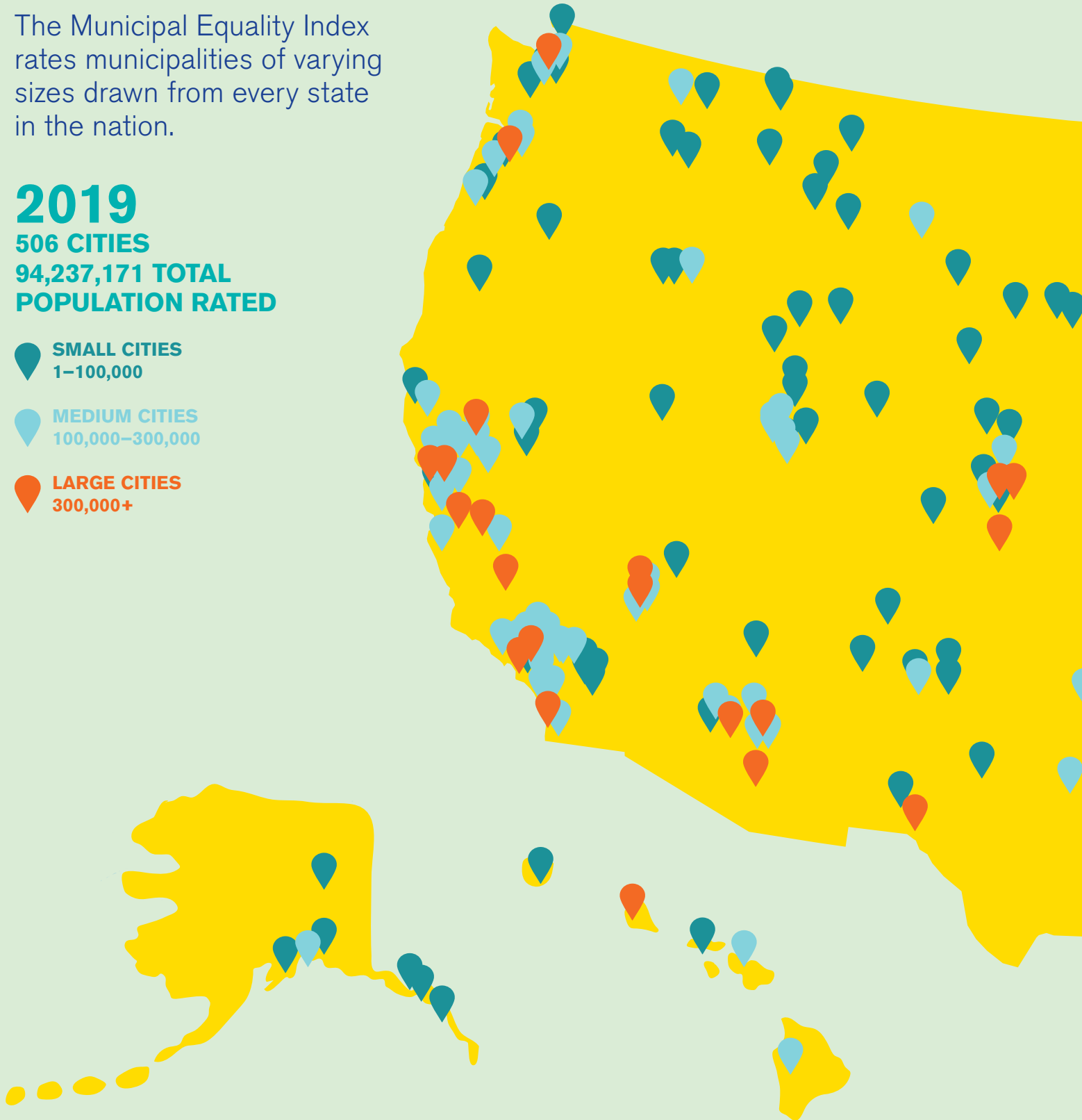
HOW IT WORKS

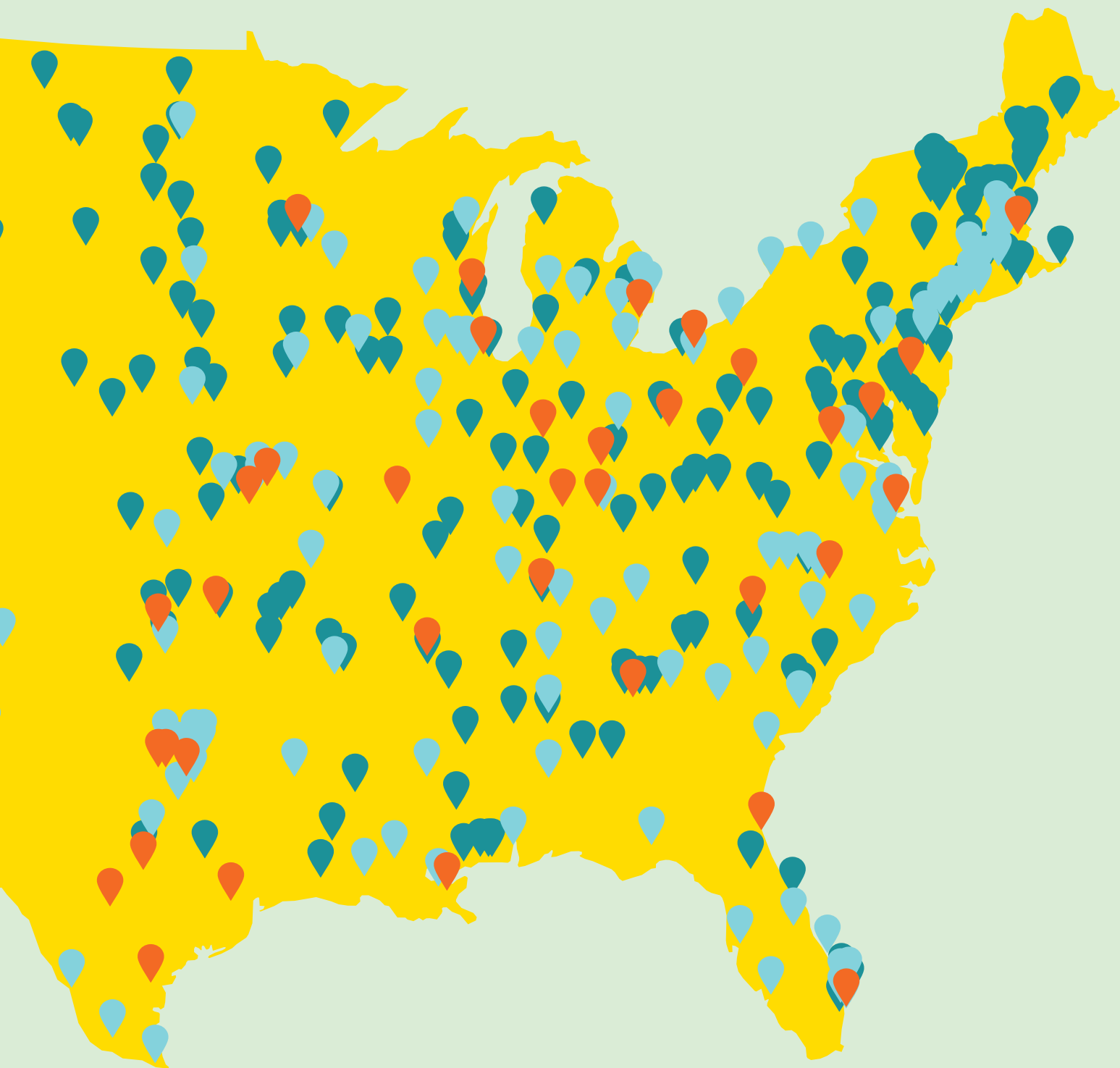
CITIES RATED BY THE MEI

The Municipal Equality Index rates municipalities of varying sizes drawn from every state in the nation.

2019
506 CITIES
94,237,171 TOTAL
POPULATION RATED

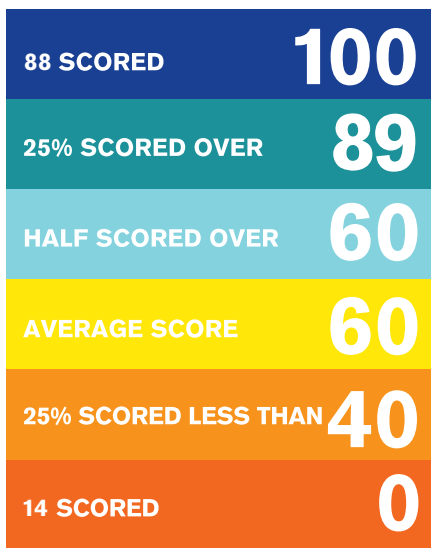
-  **SMALL CITIES**
1–100,000
-  **MEDIUM CITIES**
100,000–300,000
-  **LARGE CITIES**
300,000+





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cities Boldly Leading the Way to Equality



This edition of the MEI heralds the largest number of perfect-scoring cities in the MEI's eight year history. This year, 88 cities earned the maximum score of 100 points, up from 78 cities last year and just 11 in 2012. What's more, the national city average this year jumped to a record high of 60 points (up from 58 last year), marking the third year in a row that the national average has increased. This demonstrates that cities all across the country understand their core duty to protect the health, safety, and well-being of residents by ensuring equality in housing, the workplace, and the community at large. The 2019 MEI rates the same 506 cities on the same criteria as last year.

STRONG GAINS IN LGBTQ LEGAL PROTECTIONS

Despite another year of some state legislatures and the federal government working to block pro-equality measures, cities of all makeups and sizes led by example in enacting citywide protections for all residents, workers, and visitors.

Norman, Oklahoma and Overland Park, Kansas enacted LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination protections covering private employment, housing, and public accommodations.

The number of cities that have local protections against so-called "conversion therapy—dangerous, discredited practices that attempt to change a person's sexual orientation or gender

identity—significantly increased over the past year. As of this report, 28 localities have anti-conversion therapy protections in states with no state-level protections, 11 more than last year. Moreover, public accommodations in 101 MEI-rated municipalities are required to make single-user restrooms available to people of all genders pursuant to city, county, and/or state law.

Municipalities also utilized their administrative authority to expand inclusivity for city and city contractors' employees.

- 408 cities currently have equal employment opportunity policies that expressly include sexual orientation and/or gender identity, up by 30 over the past year.
- 182 municipalities require their contractors to have LGBTQ-inclusive employment nondiscrimination policies, an increase of 19 since last year.
- 164 cities now offer transgender-inclusive health care benefits for city employees, up from 147 last year.
- 118 cities offer equal benefits to the same- or different-sex domestic partners of city employees and their legal dependents.

Top State Average Increases Since 2018



**CITIES IN
KANSAS AND WISCONSIN**

**CITIES IN
OKLAHOMA AND VIRGINIA**

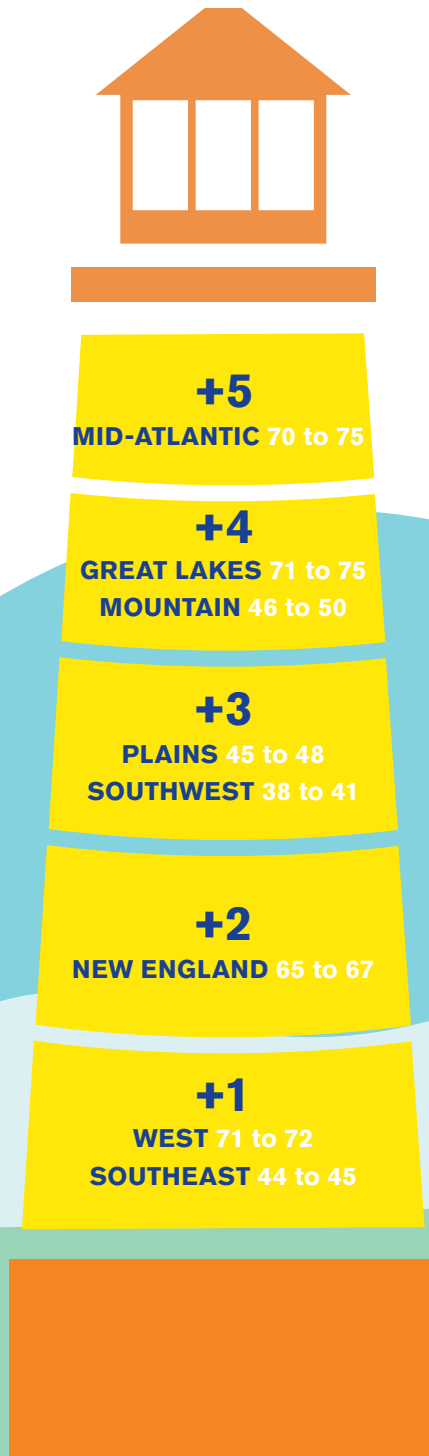


**CITIES IN
MARYLAND**

REGIONAL TRENDS

38 state averages grew since last year, with Kansas and Wisconsin leading the pack. Impressively, every region of the country experienced a mean city score increase this year. The Great Lakes and Mountain regions saw the highest average city score growth, increasing by four points since the last report. Cities in the Great Lakes and Mid-Atlantic regions outperformed cities in all other regions, averaging 75 points this year. Municipalities in the West ranked just below this with a mean city score of 72.

Regional Average Changes Over the Past Year



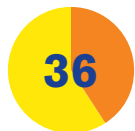
RAISING THE BAR

The 2019 MEI changed the meaning of milestones for this project. Last year's report ushered in records on nearly every front: the most perfect scores, the most cities offering transgender-inclusive health care benefits, the highest number of "All-Star" Cities, and the most LGBTQ liaisons ever appointed, to name a few. This edition moved these markers to greater heights, placing renewed emphasis on the fact that momentum is gaining for local LGBTQ equality.

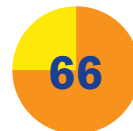
This year's MEI revealed:

- 88 100-point cities, up from 78 last year.
- 164 cities offer transgender-inclusive health care benefits to city employees, an increase of 17 since 2018.
- 59 "All-Star" Cities—cities that scored above 85 points despite being in states with no state-level LGBTQ protections—compared to 46 last year.
- 182 LGBTQ liaisons in city executive offices and 200 LGBTQ police liaisons—up by 20 and 24 since 2018, respectively.

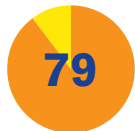
Of the 88 Cities that Earned a Perfect Score...



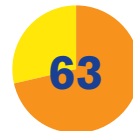
Had more **comprehensive non-discrimination laws** for trans people than the state



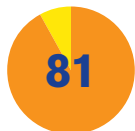
Have an **openly LGBTQ elected or appointed official** in senior leadership



Had **contractor non-discrimination policies including gender identity**



Support **direct services** to people living with HIV or AIDS



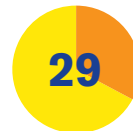
Have an **LGBTQ liaison** to the city executive



Offer **trans-inclusive health benefits** for city employees



Reported hate crimes statistics to the FBI



Support **targeted, direct services** to the transgender community



Have an **LGBTQ police liaison**



Offer benefits to same- and different-sex domestic partners of city employees

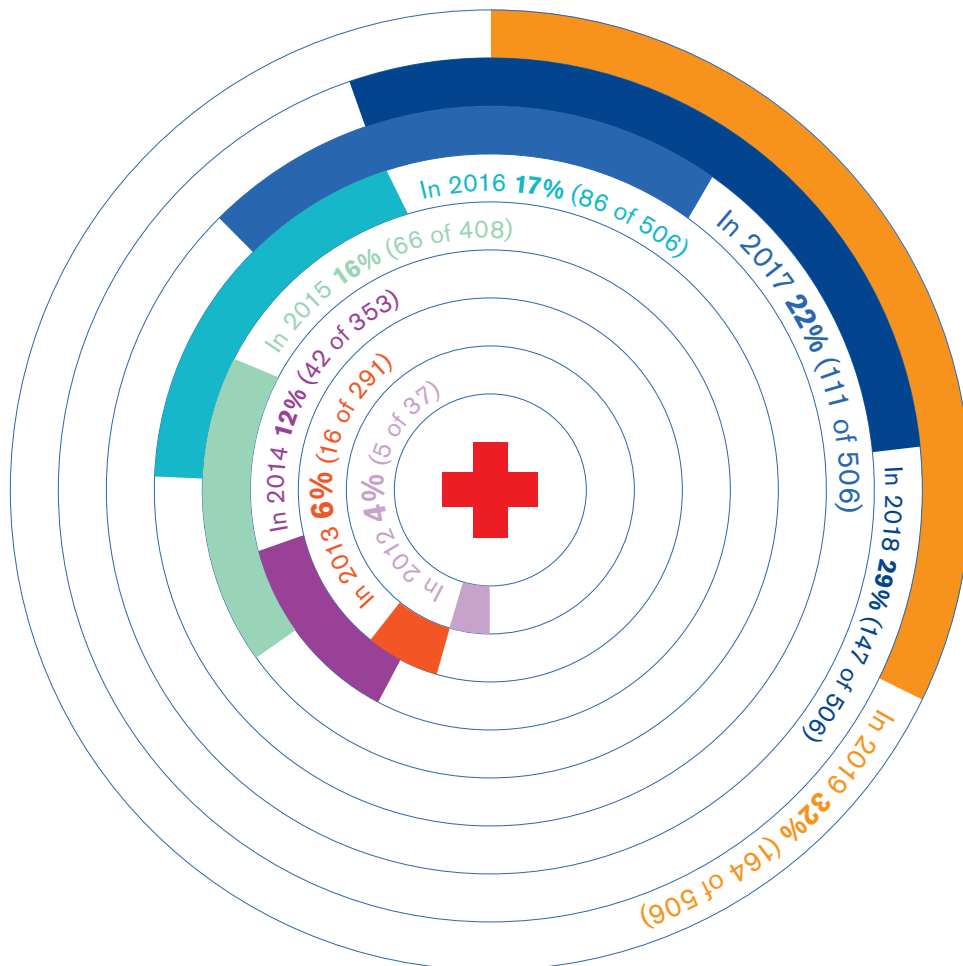
CONCLUSION

Eight years into this colossal endeavor, the MEI observes an eighth consecutive year of local officials courageously leading the way on LGBTQ equality. Even against a backdrop of some states and the federal government working to roll back vital protections, city leaders are working tirelessly to ensure that

their constituents—friends, family members, and neighbors—can secure housing, make a living, and participate in community life without being discriminated against because of who they are. These local officials know that extending legal protections to everyone, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, is both the right thing to do and the smart

way to govern. A city's commitment to diversity and inclusion is a key driver of economic success, serving to attract residents, visitors, and businesses who place a high value on inclusivity.

Number of Rated Cities Offering Trans-Inclusive Health Benefits



SUCCESS STORY: NORMAN, OKLAHOMA

The City of Norman is proud of its official motto: “Building an Inclusive Community.” The Norman City Council joined the National League of Cities’ Partnership for Working toward Inclusive Communities in 2008 and has since worked with the City’s Human Rights Commission to continue finding meaningful ways to make Norman a more inclusive community.



Over the past decade, under the leadership of Mayors Cindy Rosenthal and Lynne Miller, Norman has taken an active and progressive role in leading the way to recognize and affirm the contributions of, and provide greater protections to, local LGBTQ residents. The City had previously updated its Personnel Manual language, adopted several LGBTQ History Month Proclamations, and passed a 2015 Resolution providing that the City’s prohibition of sex discrimination included in the City’s personnel policies and Civil Rights Ordinance should be interpreted to guard against the use of assumptions and stereotypes associated with sexual orientation and gender identity.

Although praising these efforts, recently elected Mayor Breea Clark knew the City could do better and has made it a priority of her administration to further build on these previous efforts and identify more tangible ways that the City can continue to build a more inclusive community for all residents. On August 27, 2019, less than sixty days into her administration, the City passed ordinance amendments to its Civil Rights Ordinance that provide express nondiscrimination protections for sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and marital status, including marriage to a

person of the same sex, in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations. The amendments also increased employment protections for all protected characteristics by expanding the definition of employer. Mayor Clark noted that these amendments were necessary to bridge the existing gap for Norman workers, including LGBTQ employees, who work for smaller employers not otherwise covered under state or federal nondiscrimination laws. Mayor Clark also prioritized appointing formal Executive and Norman Police Department LGBTQ liaisons to streamline communication with the local LGBTQ community. The City also amended its nondiscrimination contractor policy to ensure that all contractors that conduct business with the City also adhere to these antidiscrimination provisions. These bold actions significantly increased Norman’s MEI score to 92. Mayor Clark truly believes that Norman is the best city in the State of Oklahoma and is proud of the fact that Norman is a welcoming and inclusive community for all residents to live, work, and play.

**BREEA CLARK
MAYOR**

Norman is a welcoming and inclusive community for all residents to live, work, and play.

SUCCESS STORY: ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

Anchorage, Alaska is the gateway to America's Arctic, and among the most culturally diverse cities in the United States. We are home to the most diverse neighborhoods and the most diverse schools in the country. Our city is home to cultures and traditions from around the globe and from across the North—and our city is especially honored to sit on the ancestral homelands of the Dena'ina Athabaskans, where people have lived and welcomed newcomers for thousands of years.



This tradition and spirit of welcoming defines us. Living in the remote corner of the U.S., we rely on each other not just for success, but for survival. We know that when a snowstorm threatens our safety, what matters is our willingness to extend a hand, not what color or political persuasion or sexual orientation or gender identity may be on the other end of that hand.

My administration strives to ensure that everyone in Anchorage feels safe and secure. No matter where we come from, or who we love, our city is committed to the ideals of equity and opportunity. In Anchorage, municipal employees have access to gender-affirming health care. I appointed an LGBTQ liaison, sponsored summits focused on LGBTQ issues, and support numerous community-based organizations dedicated to upholding the rights of all residents. Protecting LGBTQ rights is every bit as much of ensuring that we are a welcoming community as our efforts to combat racism, promote gender equity, and welcome newcomers—all to achieve a cohesive community in which every resident knows that they belong.

After decades of advocacy and organizing by LGBTQ community members, in 2015 the Anchorage Assembly passed a non-discrimination ordinance that outlawed discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing, and public spaces. When a ballot measure threatened to strip trans Anchorage residents of those protections, trans-identifying community members led a coalition of LGBTQ people and allies, religious organizations, and businesses to defeat the measure, making Anchorage the first U.S. city to defeat a ballot measure that would have forced transgender residents to use facilities that are inconsistent with their gender identity. In 2017, Anchorage voters elected two openly gay people to the City Assembly.

In Anchorage, we commit to upholding the rights of all residents to live lives free of fear and full of opportunity. Continuing forward remains our collective responsibility.

**ETHAN BERKOWITZ
MAYOR**

In Anchorage, we commit to upholding the rights of all residents to live lives free of fear and full of opportunity. Continuing forward remains our collective responsibility.



CITY SELECTION

How Cities Were Selected For Rating

The 2019 Municipal Equality Index rates 506 municipalities of varying sizes drawn from every state in the nation.

These include: the 50 state capitals, the 200 largest cities in the United States, the five largest cities or municipalities in each state, the cities home to the state's two largest public universities (including undergraduate and graduate enrollment), 75 cities and municipalities that have high proportions of same-sex couples and 98 cities selected by HRC and Equality Federation state groups members and supporters.

These 75 cities with highest proportions of same-sex couples are drawn from an analysis of the 2010 Census results by the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law which ranked the 25 large cities (population exceeding 250,000), 25 mid-size cities (population between 100,000 and 250,000), and 25 small cities (population below 100,000) with the highest proportion of same-sex couples. To be consistent, we rated all twenty-five of these small cities, even though some of these small "cities" are in fact unincorporated census-designated places. In that case, we rated the laws and policies of the applicable incorporated local government (the entity actually rated, often the county, will be clearly indicated).

Significant overlap between these categories of cities brings the total number of cities rated in the 2019 MEI to 506. In 2012, the MEI rated 137 cities; in 2013, 291; in 2014, 353; and in 2015 we rated 408 cities.

WHY ISN'T WASHINGTON, D.C. RATED?

Washington, D.C. is not rated by the MEI, even though it has a high proportion of same-sex couples and fits into several of the city selection criteria. Unlike the cities rated in the MEI, however, Washington D.C. is a federal district. This means that it has powers and limitations so significantly different from the municipalities the MEI rates that the comparison would be unfair—for example, no city rated by the MEI has the legal capacity to pass marriage equality, as Washington, D.C. did in 2009. While the District of Columbia is not a state, either, it is more properly compared to a state than it is to a city. For that reason, Washington, D.C. is included in HRC's annual State Equality Index. More information on Washington, D.C.'s laws and policies can be viewed on the maps of state laws located at <http://www.hrc.org/campaigns/state-equality-index>.

506 TOTAL MUNICIPALITIES

25

Small cities with highest proportion of same-sex couples

25

Midsize cities with highest proportion of same-sex couples

25

Large cities with highest proportion of same-sex couples

99

Cities home to each state's 2 largest public universities including undergraduate & graduate enrollment

200

Largest cities **in the country**

5

Largest cities in **each state**

98

Cities **selected by** HRC & Equality Federation state groups members & supporters

50

state capitals

2019 MEI SCORECARD



CITY, STATE 1/2 2019 MUNICIPAL EQUALITY INDEX SCORECARD

I. Non-Discrimination Laws

This category evaluates whether discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited by the city, county, or state in areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations.

	STATE	COUNTY	MUNICIPAL	AVAILABLE
Employment				
Housing				
Public Accommodations				
SCORE	0 out of 30			
BONUS Single-Occupancy All-Gender Facilities				
BONUS Protects Youth from Conversion Therapy				

II. Municipality as Employer

By offering equivalent benefits and protections to LGBTQ employees, awarding contracts to fair-minded businesses, and taking steps to ensure an inclusive workplace, municipalities commit themselves to treating LGBTQ employees equally.

	COUNTY	MUNICIPAL	AVAILABLE
Non-Discrimination in City Employment			
Transgender-Inclusive Healthcare Benefits			
City Contractor Non-Discrimination Ordinance			
Inclusive Workplace			
SCORE	0 out of 28		
BONUS City Employee Domestic Partner Benefits			

III. Municipal Services

This section assesses the efforts of the city to ensure LGBTQ constituents are included in city services and programs.

	COUNTY	CITY	AVAILABLE
Human Rights Commission			
NDO Enforcement by Human Rights Commission			
LGBTQ Liaison in City Executive's Office			
SCORE	0 out of 12		
BONUS Youth Bullying Prevention Policy for City Services			
BONUS City Provides Services to LGBTQ Youth			
BONUS City Provides Services to LGBTQ Homeless People			
BONUS City Provides Services to LGBTQ Elders			
BONUS City Provides Services HIV/AIDS Population			
BONUS City Provides Services to the Transgender Community			

IV. Law Enforcement

Fair enforcement of the law includes responsible reporting of hate crimes and engaging with the LGBTQ community in a thoughtful and respectful way.

	COUNTY	MUNICIPAL	AVAILABLE
LGBTQ Liaison/Task Force in Police Department	0	0	10
Reported 2017 Hate Crimes Statistics to the FBI	0	0	12
SCORE	0 out of 22		

V. Leadership on LGBTQ Equality

This category measures the city leadership's commitment to fully include the LGBTQ community and to advocate for full equality.

	COUNTY	MUNICIPAL	AVAILABLE
Leadership's Public Position on LGBTQ Equality	0	0	5
Leadership's Pro-Equality Legislative or Policy Efforts	0	0	3
SCORE	0 out of 8		
BONUS Openly LGBTQ Elected or Appointed Leaders	+0	+0	+2
BONUS City Tests Limits of Restrictive State Law	+0	+0	+3

TOTAL SCORE 0 + TOTAL BONUS 0 = Final Score 0
CANNOT EXCEED 100

PTS FOR SEXUAL ORIENTATION  PTS FOR GENDER IDENTITY  BONUS PTS for criteria not accessible to all cities at this time.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CITY SELECTION, CRITERIA OR THE MEI SCORING SYSTEM, PLEASE VISIT HRC.ORG/MEI. All cities rated were provided their scorecard in advance of publication and given the opportunity to submit revisions. For feedback regarding a particular city's scorecard, please email mei@hrc.org.

hrc.org/mei

SUCCESS STORY: RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

Since taking office in 2017, Mayor Stoney has devoted time and resources to ensuring that Richmond becomes an inclusive place to not only visit, but to live. This means that we must take care of and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community.

Before Mayor Stoney took office, Richmond's score on the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index (MEI) was 46 out of 100. Using the MEI scorecard as a policy guide, Richmond created a Human Rights Commission, established non-discrimination laws, assigned a policy advisor as an LGBTQ+ liaison, and provided transgender-inclusive health benefits for city employees.



Reflecting on these changes, the most challenging policy to implement was the establishment of the non-discrimination laws. Since Virginia is a Dillon Rule state, localities like Richmond have not been given the authority to create non-discrimination laws. But, Richmond decided to move forward anyways and incorporate such laws within the ordinance establishing their Human Rights Commission. "We decided to take a risk and incorporate these legal protections because we thought they were too important to ignore," said Mayor Stoney.

Within a year Richmond was able to increase its score to 94—the highest MEI score in Virginia—and was named an MEI All-Star city for "boldly leading the way toward LGBTQ+ equality." Out of the 506 municipalities scored in 2018, the City of Richmond experienced the most significant score increase nationwide.

"I have always said that no matter the color of your skin, the neighborhood you live in, or who you love, that you are welcome in the City of Richmond—and these policy

changes were a critical part of our progress towards supporting and protecting Richmond's LGBTQ+ community," said Mayor Stoney.

The City of Richmond is not going to stop there. Most recently, Mayor Stoney introduced and city council approved a resolution supporting the prohibition of conversion therapy in the city and across the Commonwealth of Virginia. "We must strongly state our values as a city and push back against the state when necessary—such as against the cruel practice of conversion therapy," stated Mayor Stoney.

The City of Richmond appreciates the dedicated work of the Human Rights Campaign to guide cities towards LGBTQ+ equality.

**LEVAR M. STONEY
MAYOR**

I have always said that no matter the color of your skin, the neighborhood you live in, or who you love, that you are welcome in the City of Richmond.

SCORING CRITERIA

I. Non-Discrimination Laws

It should not be legal to deny someone the opportunity to work, rent a home, or be served in a place of public accommodation because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

This category evaluates whether discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited within the city in areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations. In each category, cities receive five points for prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and five points for prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity. There will be a three point deduction for non-discrimination protections in public accommodations that contain carve-outs prohibiting individuals from using facilities consistent with their gender identity. Additionally, up to six points will be deducted for religious exemptions that single out sexual orientation and/or gender identity. All non-discrimination laws ought to be fully inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people. Sexual orientation-only protections are not sufficient to protect the LGBTQ community from discrimination.

PART I POINTS CAN COME FROM STATE LAW, COUNTY LAW, OR CITY LAW.

If the state or county has a comprehensive and inclusive non-discrimination law that applies within the city limits, a city may conclude it is an inefficient use of resources to pass a local non-discrimination

ordinance. For that reason, so long as the protections of a state or county law apply throughout city limits, the city effectively has such protections, and the state or county law will earn the city points in Part I. If there is no state or county law, but the city has passed an ordinance of its own volition, the city will receive credit for those non-discrimination protections. However, where laws exist at both the city and the state (or county) level, the city will not receive double (or triple) points—the maximum points in this section are capped at 30.

ALL-GENDER SINGLE-OCCUPANCY FACILITIES

Transgender individuals face disproportionately high levels of prejudice and discrimination in everyday life. These members of our community deserve the same dignity and respect as everyone else, in every area of life. This includes being afforded the dignity of equal access to public facilities in accordance with the gender they live every day.

Making single-user facilities open to everyone regardless of gender makes sense on every level. Not only does it provide a safe space for transgender residents, it benefits everyone by reducing line wait times. Cities that require all single-user sex-segregated facilities within the city like bathrooms and changing rooms to be all-gender will receive two bonus points. Cities that designate all single-occupancy facilities within its own buildings as all-gender will receive half credit (one bonus point).

PROTECTS YOUTH FROM CONVERSION THERAPY

So-called “conversion therapy,” sometimes called “sexual orientation change efforts” or “reparative therapy,” encompasses a range of dangerous and discredited practices that falsely claim to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. These practices are based on the false premise that being LGBTQ is a mental illness that needs to be cured—a theory that has been rejected by every major medical and mental health organization.

There is no credible evidence that conversion therapy can change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. To the contrary, research has clearly shown that these practices pose devastating health risks for LGBTQ young people such as depression, decreased self-esteem, substance abuse, homelessness, and even suicidal behavior. The harmful practice is condemned by every major medical and mental health organization, including the American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association, and American Medical Association.

Cities that enact laws to protect youth from conversion therapy will garner two bonus points.

II. Municipality as Employer

Almost every municipality has immediate control over its employment policies. Respect for LGBTQ employees is clearly demonstrated by the inclusiveness of these employment policies.

CITY PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION IN CITY EMPLOYMENT

Cities can adopt internal hiring policies that prohibit employment discrimination (including hiring, promotions, termination, and compensation) on the basis of sexual orientation (7 points) and gender identity or expression (7 points). It is a fundamental principle of fairness that an employee should be judged on their ability to perform the responsibilities of a position, and not by who they are or whom they love. A state-level non-discrimination law or a local non-discrimination ordinance alone is not sufficient to earn these points—personnel policies must enumerate sexual orientation and gender identity in order for the city to receive credit.

TRANSGENDER-INCLUSIVE HEALTHCARE BENEFITS

Cities, like other employers, provide health benefits to their employees, but some employees routinely have critical and medically necessary treatment excluded from the health care options they are offered. Transgender employees are routinely denied health care coverage for gender-affirming care such as hormone replacement therapy, gender confirmation surgery, and other medically necessary care. Municipalities must provide at least one health insurance plan (6 points) that provides coverage for transgender healthcare needs (gender confirmation surgeries, hormone replacement therapy, and other gender-affirming care). The policy must affirmatively include gender-affirming care; a lack of exclusion is not sufficient for an award of points because this care is routinely presumed to be not covered.

CITY REQUIRES ITS CONTRACTORS TO HAVE INCLUSIVE NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES

Cities who take fair workplaces seriously also require city contractors to have inclusive non-discrimination policies. An equal opportunity ordinance, as these are sometimes known, requires city contractors to adopt non-discrimination policies that prohibit adverse employment actions on the basis of sexual orientation (3 points) and gender identity or expression (3 points).

Partial credit is awarded to cities that do not have an official policy or ordinance to this effect, but maintains a practice of including a qualifying city contractor non-discrimination clause in all city contracts.

MUNICIPALITY IS AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

This section measures whether the city is a welcoming workplace for LGBTQ employees as measured by the following: the city actively recruits LGBTQ employees, or conducts LGBTQ-inclusive diversity training, or it has an LGBTQ employee affinity group (a total of 2 bonus points are awarded if any of these exist).

Cities will receive credit for offering equal benefits to both same- and different-sex domestic partners of city employees and their legal dependents. Even after nationwide marriage equality, it is important to respect the diverse family forms that exist by expanding domestic partner benefits to include all families.

SUCCESS STORY: EQUALITY FLORIDA

Florida continues to lead the South in local policy advances protecting our LGBTQ community. Nearly 12 million Floridians—roughly 60% of our state—are protected from discrimination at the local level. To date, 21 municipalities have enacted protections against the harmful practice of conversion therapy, creating important upward pressure for statewide change.



Florida is a perennial swing state for national elections, but its decidedly skewed state legislature has resisted tackling LGBTQ issues. To meet this challenge, Florida's LGBTQ community has been carving out victories at the city and county level. Recently, addressing the deceptive and debunked practice of conversion therapy has been an important fixture of our statewide strategy.

Local activists in Miami-Dade and Palm Beach Counties advanced the first protections against conversion therapy on minors in our state. Just a few years later, when Alachua County enacted similar protections in 2019, it became the 21st local government in Florida to do so and the first in the more conservative North Florida region.

Equality Florida works in coalition with support from national partners to convene local advocates who support anti-conversion therapy protections. When we approach local governments about this dangerous and fraudulent practice, we invariably also mention that enacting protections is credited in

MEI scores. The MEI helps create a measurable, friendly rivalry that excites local governments to keep pace with or surpass other local governments. When we pass one ordinance, we leverage the win to push other local governments.

Enacting local anti-conversion therapy laws is providing vital protections for vulnerable LGBTQ youth. At the same time, it's also providing a roadmap for state-level progress.

Using the MEI, Equality Florida and our local partners are working every day to end this harmful practice forever. When we rack up enough wins, we'll finally change the climate in our legislature and shift the dial statewide. Together we are changing hearts, minds, and laws in the country's third-largest state.

**JOSEPH SAUNDERS
SENIOR POLITICAL DIRECTOR
EQUALITY FLORIDA**

Enacting local anti-conversion therapy laws is providing vital protections for vulnerable LGBTQ youth. At the same time, it's also providing a roadmap for state-level progress.



EXPANDING PREP ACCESS TO HELP END THE HIV EPIDEMIC

In Partnership with National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD)



HIV remains a major public health crisis in the United States. HIV, which stands for human immunodeficiency virus, is a virus spread through certain bodily fluids that attacks the body's immune system. If left untreated, HIV can make it difficult for the body to fight off infections and diseases and can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Thanks to modern medical advancements, people living with HIV who are on treatment can live long, healthy lives and pose no risk of sexual transmission to others.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are over 1.1 million Americans currently living with HIV and almost 40,000 new infections every year.¹ While HIV affects Americans from all walks of life, the virus continues to disproportionately impact members of the LGBTQ community. Almost two-thirds of new HIV infections are among gay and bisexual men.² Additionally, according to a 2015 survey of 28,000 transgender adults, transgender women are living with HIV at over

eleven times the rate of the general population.³ HIV also disproportionately affects racial minorities. In 2017, Black gay and bisexual men accounted for the largest number of HIV diagnoses,⁴ and the 2015 survey found that one in five Black transgender women are living with HIV.⁵ These sobering statistics demonstrate the need for a comprehensive strategy to end this epidemic that includes significantly increasing access to highly effective prevention methods like PrEP.

What is PrEP?

PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis, is a safe and effective way to prevent the transmission of HIV. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the use of two medicines, emtricitabine and tenofovir (TDF/FTC, brand name Truvada), to prevent HIV in 2012.⁶ The CDC notes that "PrEP reduces the risk of getting HIV from sex by about 99% when taken daily."⁷ Despite years

of proven efficacy, at-risk individuals continue to face unnecessary barriers to PrEP access, including a lack of education and awareness on the part of individuals who would benefit from PrEP as well as health care providers, a lack of health care coverage, and prohibitive associated costs. According to the CDC, over 1.2 million Americans are at "substantial risk" of contracting

HIV and are eligible for PrEP.⁸ A 2018 study of PrEP use distribution found that no more than 117,000 people—less than 10% of those at substantial risk—were taking PrEP.⁹

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *HIV in the United States and Dependent Areas*, <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/statistics/overview/atag glance.html> (last modified Sept. 9, 2019).

² *Id.*

³ Sandy E. James, et al., *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*, National Center for Transgender Equality, 10 (2016) [hereafter *Transgender Survey*].

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *HIV in the United States and Dependent Areas*, <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/statistics/overview/atag glance.html> (last modified

Sept. 9, 2019).

⁵ *Transgender Survey* at 10.

⁶ U.S. Food and Drug Administration, *Truvada for PrEP Fact Sheet*, <https://www.fda.gov/downloads/drugs/drugsafety/postmarketdrugsafetyinformationforpatientsandproviders/ucm312290.pdf> (accessed Mar. 26, 2019).

⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)*, <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/risk/prep/index.html> (last modified Sept. 9, 2019).

⁸ Dawn Smith, et al., *Vital Signs: Estimated Percentages*

and Numbers of Adults with Indications for Preexposure Prophylaxis to Prevent HIV Acquisition — United States, 2015, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6446a4.htm> (last updated Nov. 27, 2015).

Aaron J. Siegler, et al., *The prevalence of pre-exposure prophylaxis use and the pre-exposure prophylaxis-to-need ratio in the fourth quarter of 2017, United States*, 28 *Annals Epidemiology* 841-849 (2018).

Barriers to PrEP Access and User Persistence

CANDIDATE AND PROVIDER AWARENESS

Key populations impacted by the HIV epidemic are quickly learning about PrEP and are willing to use it. Awareness of PrEP among gay and bisexual men in 20 urban areas across the United States increased significantly—from 61% to 90%—between 2014 and 2017.¹⁰ PrEP use among gay and bisexual men also increased significantly during this period, from 5.7% to 35.1%.¹¹ Despite these welcome increases in PrEP use, inequities persist. For example, while 42% of white gay and bisexual men reported using PrEP in 2017, only 26% and 30% of their Black and Latino peers indicated using it, respectively.¹² Addressing the numerous barriers that create these disparities (discussed below) should be an integral component of local efforts to increase PrEP awareness.

Although knowledge of PrEP among primary care providers continues to increase, there is still much room for improvement. Infectious disease specialist practices, local health department specialty clinics, and community health centers with a history of providing HIV care have taken the lead in prescribing PrEP to at-risk individuals. However, to achieve a population-level impact, more primary care providers need to be aware of PrEP and prescribe it to individuals at risk of acquiring HIV. A dearth of PrEP-competent providers continues to be a significant challenge in PrEP candidates accessing the medication, particularly in Southern states and rural areas across the country.¹³ Primary care providers should routinize an evidence-informed protocol to identify which of their patients would benefit from PrEP and offer it as the standard of care.

COSTS AND FUNDING

Costs related to health insurance, PrEP-related doctor visits and lab tests, and restrictions on the use of certain HIV-specific federal funds also impede the goal of making PrEP accessible to everyone who would benefit from it. These expenses also affect user persistence—the length of time that a PrEP user remains adherent to the regimen and therefore remains protected from HIV.

The high price of PrEP medication and related medical expenses make PrEP cost prohibitive for most people who do not have health insurance or access to PrEP assistance programs. Studies have shown that gay and bisexual men who have health care coverage are twice as likely to have used PrEP as their uninsured peers.¹⁴ Having health care coverage also has an impact on PrEP persistence. A study conducted at a public health clinic in Fulton County, Georgia showed that uninsured clients were almost three times as likely

¹⁰ Teresa Finlayson, et al., *Changes in HIV Preexposure Prophylaxis Awareness and Use Among Men Who Have Sex with Men — 20 Urban Areas, 2014 and 2017*, *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6827a1.htm> (last rev'd July 11, 2019).

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ Aaron J. Siegler, et al., *Geographic Access to Preexposure Prophylaxis Clinics Among Men Who Have Sex With Men in the United States*, 109 *Am. J. Pub. Health* 1216-1223 (2019).

¹⁴ Brooke E. Hoots, et al., *Willingness to Take, Use of, and Indications for Pre-exposure Prophylaxis Among Men Who Have Sex With Men—20 US Cities, 2014*, 63 *Clinical Infectious Diseases* 672-677 (2016).

¹⁵ Charlotte-Paige Rolle, et al., *PrEP Implementation and Persistence in a County Health Department in Atlanta, GA*, *Emory Univ.*, http://www.croiconference.org/sites/default/files/posters-2018/1430_Holland_1010.pdf (last accessed Sept. 26, 2019).

to have stopped using PrEP within six months after starting to take it.¹⁵

Even for those with health insurance, costs are often still a barrier to getting and staying on PrEP. Although most health insurance plans cover the medication and lab tests for PrEP, patients report challenges in affording related out-of-pocket costs and in overcoming burdensome insurance restrictions like prior authorization requirements. In most cases, assistance programs that are currently available through the drug manufacturer or private foundations can cover all out-of-pocket costs for the medication for patients. However, the complexity of the patchwork of assistance programs that patients in need of financial assistance must navigate may itself become a barrier for both providers and patients. Fortunately, starting in 2021, PrEP should not incur out-of-pocket costs for insured individuals given the recent designation of PrEP as a grade “A” preventive service by the US Preventive Services Task Force. Under the Affordable Care Act, this “A” rating requires Medicaid programs to provide it and private insurers to cover PrEP with no cost to the patient.

Cities and counties also face gaps in public health funding for PrEP medication and related costs. Currently, statutory language and interpretive guidance require funds granted under the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) to be used only for the care and treatment of people diagnosed with HIV, precluding the use of RWHAP funds for PrEP medication and PrEP-related medical services like physician visits and laboratory costs. Importantly, RWHAP programs across the country have been able to weave together multiple sources of funding and clinical expertise across HIV prevention and care programs to provide the same level of care for PrEP and RWHAP patients. Cities and counties have also leveraged RWHAP activities such as outreach, risk reduction counseling, targeted testing, and linkage to care to identify PrEP candidates and refer them to a PrEP program. Moreover, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently proposed the *Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Plan for America* initiative that seeks to end the HIV epidemic in the United States within a decade. This plan has a very strong focus on the 48 counties and nine other jurisdictions that account for 50 percent of new HIV infections

nationally.¹⁶ New federal funds have been requested for these cities and counties to expand PrEP access as part of this effort. Furthermore, some states have established PrEP assistance programs that city health departments can leverage as part of a comprehensive local strategy to increase PrEP access for at-risk residents.

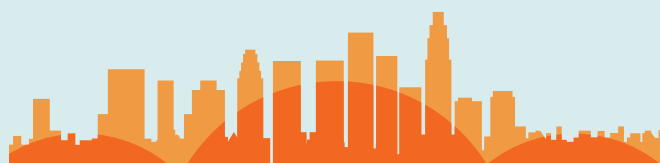
STIGMA AND LACK OF CULTURALLY COMPETENT CARE

Finally, some at-risk individuals may avoid taking PrEP due to HIV or PrEP-related stigma and concerns about receiving culturally competent care. To combat negative stereotypes that could prevent at-risk communities from discussing PrEP with their health care provider, cities should seek to counter negative stereotypes through positive education campaigns targeting potential PrEP users and their communities. What's more, cities should ensure that local health department officials and providers who receive city funding are trained on how to screen for PrEP eligibility and facilitate PrEP persistence in a culturally responsive way that does not further PrEP-related stigma.

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *What is 'Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Plan for America'?*, <https://www.hiv.gov/federal-response/ending-the-hiv-epidemic/overview> (last modified: September 3, 2019).

Municipalities Making A Difference

Municipalities across the country are leading the way on initiatives and policies designed to increase PrEP access and protect at-risk communities.



CHICAGO AND NEW YORK CITY: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPROACHES TO INFORM PREP IMPLEMENTATION

The Chicago Department of Public Health and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene have both convened working groups of clinical providers and community representatives to inform what services are needed and how to provide them in a culturally responsive manner. By bringing together a wide array of stakeholders and developing a joint plan, the groups have enabled the health departments to identify gaps in PrEP coverage across each city. Through these PrEP working groups, the health departments have been able to identify and troubleshoot providers' and PrEP users' challenges as they emerge. The group in New York City, for example, prompted providers from across the City to take leadership in collaborating and coordinating city-wide activities.¹⁷

BALTIMORE, CHICAGO, LOS ANGELES, AND NEW YORK CITY: DEVELOPING COMMUNITY-INFORMED SOCIAL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

More and more cities across the country are developing social marketing and educational campaigns to promote PrEP. Baltimore,¹⁸ Chicago,¹⁹ Los Angeles,²⁰ and New York City²¹ stand out with campaigns that elevate individuals within their communities and counteract stereotypes that stigmatize people impacted by HIV. These four health departments made a concerted effort to understand the underlying myths about PrEP. As part of their processes, each city researched their residents' attitudes, beliefs, and motivating factors related to PrEP use and crafted messages that avoid using fear and guilt while celebrating their city's diversity.

¹⁷ New York City Department of Health, PlaySure Network for HIV Prevention, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/providers/resources/playsure-network.page> (last accessed Sept. 26, 2019).

¹⁸ Baltimore City Health Department, Baltimore in Conversation, <https://www.baltimoreinconversation.com/> (last accessed Sept. 26, 2019).

¹⁹ AIDS Foundation of Chicago, PrEP4Love, <http://www.prep4love.com/> (last accessed Sept. 26, 2019).

²⁰ LA County Department of Public Health, GETPrEPLA, <http://getprepla.com/> (last accessed Sept. 26, 2019).

²¹ New York City Department of Health, Health Department Expands Hours and Services at Corona Sexual Health

Clinic, Launches Second "iLISTOS!" Campaign, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/about/press/pr2018/pr082-18.page> (Oct. 15, 2018).



HOUSTON: INNOVATING WAYS TO FINANCE CLINICAL SERVICES FOR PrEP AT CITY CLINICS

The Houston Health Department is building a sustainable PrEP program that can cover the cost of providing care for both insured and uninsured PrEP patients. The city's clinic is partnering with a pharmacy to bill health plans for the medication for PrEP. As part of a federal drug pricing program that is available to certain safety-net clinics, the health department can purchase the medication at a discount and bill private health insurance carriers the full cost of the medication. In this way, the clinic can use the savings it obtains from the discounted purchase of the medication to pay for unreimbursed PrEP-related operating costs, including providing PrEP services to uninsured patients.



SAN FRANCISCO: YOUTH-INCLUSIVE APPROACHES

San Francisco began implementing an “Emergency Youth Truvada Fund” in 2017 to help dependents and minors overcome cost barriers. The fund fills financing gaps for minors age 15 and above, who are able to consent to PrEP care without guardian consent in the state. In addition to establishing the fund, San Francisco has emphasized the importance of providing health insurance navigation and navigation to access private assistance programs for PrEP patients across their public health activities.



FORT LAUDERDALE: LEVERAGING LOCAL AND STATE RESOURCES TO INCREASE PrEP USE

The Florida Health Department in Broward County and local health department clinics across Florida are now offering PrEP care to all of their clinic patients. They are partnering with the state health department to procure the medication for their uninsured patients if they're not able to leverage the manufacturer's assistance program. This state-local partnership promises to make PrEP available for everyone in the state who needs it by eliminating cost barriers and ensuring that all public health clinics are able to provide access to it.



SAN FRANCISCO AND NEW YORK CITY: DATA-DRIVEN PROVIDER EDUCATION EFFORTS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The San Francisco Department of Public Health and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene have trained staff who focus on educating providers about PrEP and other preventive services. These public health workers visit and educate providers in areas with the highest incidence of recent HIV diagnoses and few providers prescribing PrEP. They share information about best practices and recommendations and answer questions from clinical staff. Some programs also include education for front desk and clinical support staff to ensure culturally responsive care across the patient's experience at the clinic.



Conclusion

BIRMINGHAM, NEW ORLEANS, BALTIMORE AND FORT LAUDERDALE: SUPPORT FOR PATIENTS NAVIGATING COMPLEX HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS

Health departments across the country now support PrEP navigator positions at clinic and community-based organizations. PrEP navigators serve as patient advocates, helping patients secure health coverage and enroll in PrEP assistance programs. They also provide counseling to support PrEP persistence and connect patients to other support services. PrEP navigators in Baltimore, funded in partnership with the Maryland Department of Public Health, leverage case managers with expertise in health insurance navigation. In Fort Lauderdale, these specialized navigators serve as patient advocates as well as benefits coordinators, not only assisting patients with obtaining health care coverage and financial assistance, but also advocating on their behalf when interacting with new health care systems.

The ability of at-risk individuals to access and remain on PrEP is an integral component of the effort to end the HIV epidemic in the United States. Local leaders have a vital role to play in helping end this epidemic and must prioritize culturally responsive policies, practices, and services that help at-risk communities access safe and effective HIV prevention tools like PrEP. Cities and counties around the country should draw from the aforementioned models in their efforts to further PrEP awareness and education, reduce financial and other barriers to PrEP access and persistence, combat stigma related to people impacted by HIV, and ensure competent, culturally responsive care for PrEP patients.

Additional Resources

General Resources

- HRC HIV & AIDS Online Resource Center
<https://www.hrc.org/explore/topic/hiv-aids>

- What Do I Do? A Handbook to Understanding Health & HIV
<https://www.greaterthan.org/get-prep/>

- Find a PrEP Provider
<https://www.greaterthan.org/get-prep/>

PrEP and HIV Prevention Financing:

- HIV Prevention Billing Coding Guide (NASTAD)
<https://www.greaterthan.org/get-prep/>

- Financing HIV Prevention (NASTAD)
<https://www.nastad.org/financing-HIV-prevention>

- PrEPCost.org (NASTAD)
<http://www.PrEPCost.org>

- Leveraging Financing and Coverage Benefits: Medicaid Strategies to Deliver PrEP Intervention Services (Academy Health)
<https://www.academyhealth.org/publications/2019-01/medicaid-financing-and-coverage-benefits-can-be-leveraged-improve-delivery-hiv-prevention-services>

PrEP Implementation Models

- PrEP and Local Health Departments Educational Series (National Association of County and City State Health Officials)
<https://www.naccho.org/programs/community-health/infectious-disease/hiv-sti/prep-1/prep>

III. Services and Programs

Census data shows that LGBTQ people live in virtually every city in the country, but not every city recognizes that their LGBTQ constituents can have different needs. This section assesses the efforts of the city to include LGBTQ constituents in city services and programs.

Human Rights Commissions do important work to identify and eliminate discrimination; even in jurisdictions where LGBTQ equality isn't explicitly a part of the commission's charter, these commissions investigate complaints, educate the city, and sometimes enforce non-discrimination laws. Human Rights Commissions serve as important bridges between constituents and their city.

A Human Rights Commission will be worth five standard points if its purpose is largely or entirely educational. These commissions may hold community discussions, screen movies, present panels, take public comment, advise the city on matters of diversity

and inclusion, develop policies and strategies for making the city more inclusive, and undertake other similar types of endeavors. Where, in addition to the functions listed above, a Human Rights Commission has the authority to conciliate, issue a right to sue letter, or otherwise enforce non-discrimination protections, that commission will earn two bonus points in addition to the five standard points awarded above.

Similarly, an LGBTQ liaison to the Mayor or City Manager's office (5 points) is responsible for looking at city policies and services through an LGBTQ lens and speaking up when a policy or service might exclude LGBTQ people. This position is also known to be a friendly ear to constituents who want to bring LGBTQ-related issues to the city government but are fearful they might be dismissed or misunderstood.

Cities that expressly prohibit bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity in all youth-facing city programs, activities, services, facilities, and funding will earn up to

two bonus points (1 bonus point for sexual orientation/1 bonus point for gender identity). These policies should cover, for example, the city's parks and recreation department, library programs, and any other department or service that incorporate young people.

The MEI also evaluates city services that address segments of the LGBTQ population who are particularly vulnerable and may have specific and acute needs. While all people age, battle illness, struggle to fit in, and work hard to improve their lot in life, these struggles can be different and particularly difficult for LGBTQ people. Cities can address these challenges by offering services—or supporting a third party provider of these services—to LGBTQ youth, LGBTQ elders, LGBTQ homeless people, people who are HIV-positive or living with AIDS and the transgender community (2 bonus points for each service the city provides).

While all people age, battle illness, struggle to fit in, and work hard to improve their lot in life, **these struggles can be different** and particularly difficult for LGBTQ people.

IV. Law Enforcement

The relationship between law enforcement and the LGBTQ community is often fraught with suspicion, misunderstanding, and fear.

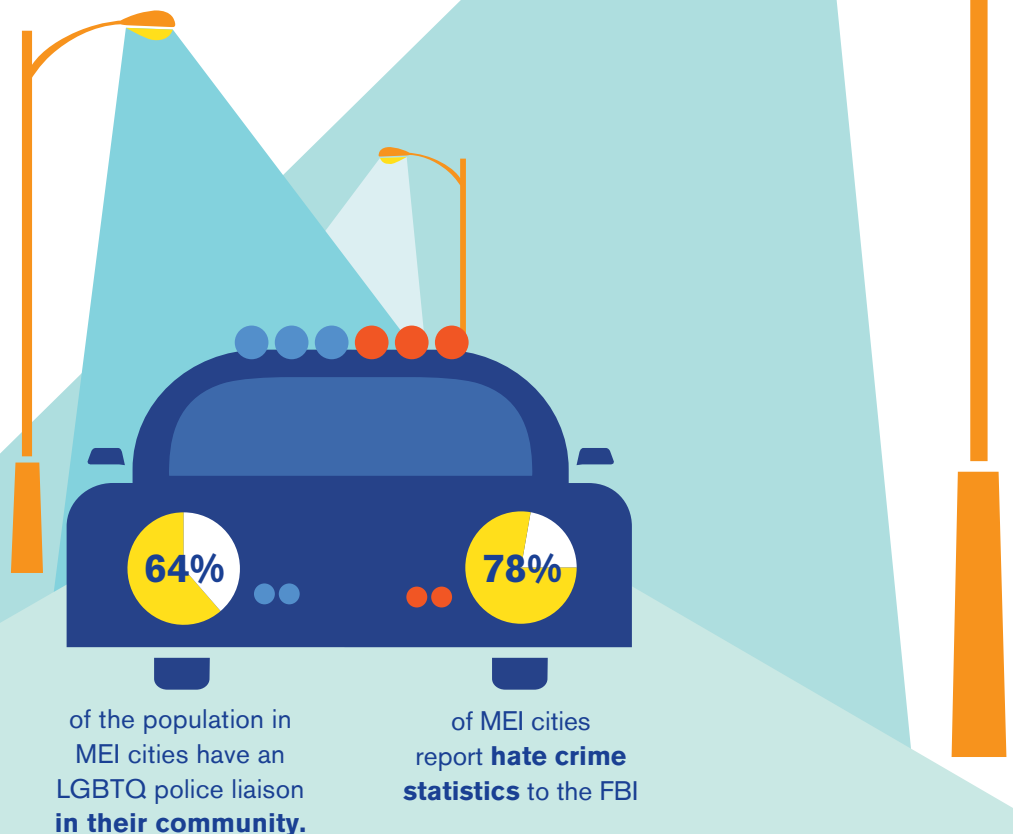
LGBTQ people are vulnerable to violence arising from bigotry and ignorance, and this danger is only exacerbated when police are perceived to be part of the problem.

However, a police force can ensure safety for all by treating LGBTQ people with understanding and respect, remaining mindful of the LGBTQ community's unique law enforcement concerns and engaging the community in a positive way.

An LGBTQ police liaison (10 points) can serve as an important bridge between the community and law enforcement. The liaison is an

advocate for fair and respectful enforcement of the law as well as an officer that the community can rely upon to appropriately respond to sensitive issues.

Respectful and fair enforcement includes responsible reporting of hate crimes, including for hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity, to the FBI (12 points). Such reporting demonstrates law enforcement's attention to these crimes and ensures that the larger law enforcement community is able to accurately gauge the scope and responses to them.



V. Relationship with the LGBTQ Community

Leadership is an aspect of policy that is not fully captured by executive orders or the passage of legislation into law. When a city leader marches in a Pride parade, a city joins a pro-equality amicus brief, a city council dedicates a park to an LGBTQ civil rights leader, or a city paints its crosswalks in rainbow colors, it sends a message to LGBTQ people that they are a valued part of the community.

At first glance, these actions may seem to be more symbol than substance; however, as HRC reported in its groundbreaking youth report in 2012, four in ten LGBTQ youth surveyed said the community in which they live is not accepting of LGBTQ people, and 60% of the youth surveyed said they heard negative messages about being LGBTQ from elected leaders.

Further, LGBTQ youth are twice as likely as their peers to say they will need to move from their hometown in order to feel accepted. When elected leaders speak out on matters of equality, their constituents do hear—and it informs their constituents' perception of safety, inclusion, and belonging.

This category, therefore, measures the commitment of the city to include the LGBTQ community and to advocate for full equality.

The first category rates city leadership (on a scale of zero to five points) on its public statements on matters of equality, particularly where the city leadership pushes for equality in the face of substantial adversity.

For example, a city would be awarded points if the city council passed a resolution in support of a state level non-discrimination bill—while this is not something the city can legislate, it is a powerful statement of the city's principles nonetheless.

The level of support for pro-equality legislation is also reflected in this section. The second category rates the persistence of the city leadership in pursuing legislation or policies that further equality (on a scale of zero to three points).

Note that even small or unsuccessful efforts are recognized in this category, and that these efforts may be heavily weighted if the city's political environment is not conducive to passing pro-equality legislation.

Finally, this section also includes two opportunities to earn bonus points: first, for openly LGBTQ people holding elected or appointed office in the municipality (two bonus points); and second, for cities who do all they can in the face of state law that restricts their ability to pass LGBTQ-inclusive laws or policies (three bonus points).

When elected leaders speak out on matters of equality, their constituents do hear—and it informs their constituents' perception of **safety, inclusion, and belonging.**

ACKNOWLEDGING CONTEXT

Not All Cities Are Created Equal

Some cities have the autonomy and wherewithal to pass inclusive laws and offer cutting-edge city services; other cities are hampered by severe state-imposed limitations on their ability to pass inclusive laws, or they have found that the small scope of their local government limits their capabilities.

The MEI is designed to understand the unique situation of each city and is structured to reward the specific achievements of a local government.

The efforts and achievements of each city can only be fairly judged within that city's context; while imposing a score may seem to strip a city of its context, the MEI honors the different situations from which the selected cities come in three major ways:

BONUS POINTS

First, in addition to the 100 standard points for city laws and services, the MEI includes 22 bonus points.

Bonus points are awarded for essential programs, protections, or benefits that are not attainable or very difficult to attain for some cities; therefore, cities with the item are rewarded, but cities without it are not penalized.

Bonus points can also provide some leeway for cities that face challenges in accomplishing the specific achievements the MEI measures, and ensure that every city has the ability to improve its score for next year.

CONSIDERATION OF STATE LAW

Second, the MEI weights state and municipal law such that the effect of excellent or restrictive state law does not determine the city's ability to score well.

LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP

Third, it also rates the city leadership's public position on LGBTQ equality and gives credit for legislative efforts (even unsuccessful efforts), so if a city has outspoken advocates for equality who are unfortunately still in the minority, the city will still receive credit for the efforts it has made.

The MEI is designed to **understand the unique situation** of each city and is structured to reward the specific achievements of a local government.

ACHIEVING A HEALTHIER, STRONGER WORKFORCE THROUGH INCLUSIVE PAID LEAVE



The United States is the only industrialized nation in the world without some form of guaranteed paid leave. Currently, the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) allows many American workers to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave per year due to significant family or medical events, including the birth and care of a newborn and the care of an immediate family member dealing with a serious health condition.¹ In addition

to the private sector, FMLA covers all public agencies, which includes municipalities and their constituent departments.

Despite the availability of this limited FMLA leave, many municipal workers are unable to take time off to care for themselves or family members because they cannot afford the loss of wages, which are all the more important during significant family events and health crises. To truly allow workers the ability to take time off to provide vital care for

themselves or loved ones, employers are increasingly offering employees paid leave benefits, which permit employees to take sufficient paid, job-secured time off for significant life events like the birth or adoption of a child and the emergence of significant health issues. Paid leave not only helps ensure the health and well-being of employees and their families, but also improves employee productivity and satisfaction and helps employers attract and retain top talent by giving them a competitive edge.

Paid Leave is an LGBTQ Issue

Without access to paid leave, municipal employees who take unpaid leave can be thrown into financial chaos and struggle to cover everyday expenses like groceries and rent without a steady income. According to a 2018 survey conducted by the Human Rights Campaign, financial concerns are the greatest factor forcing LGBTQ people to return to work early after taking leave—or forcing them to forgo taking time off entirely.² The negative consequences of this loss of income is severely compounded in the context of leave-qualifying events like the serious illness of an employee's loved one or the employee's own life-threatening diagnosis.

LGBTQ people are particularly vulnerable in the absence of guaranteed paid leave. This is especially true in states that lack explicit protections for employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. LGBTQ people are more likely to be living in poverty,³ mistreated in the workplace,⁴ and discriminated against during the hiring process⁵—making a request for unpaid time off, without clear and enforceable protocols, both impractical and un navigable.

LGBTQ people may also be unable to take time off to care for a loved one without “outing” their identities or relationships at work, which may

result in adverse treatment and could cost them their jobs. Some fear the stigma they could face if they reveal the need to take time off for HIV-related care or transgender-specific treatment. Too many others, especially transgender people of color and those who are low-income, may face other forms of anti-LGBTQ discrimination, housing instability, and violence. These hardships are likely to compound each other, especially as individuals lose their steady source of income and grapple with significant life events.

Moreover, while it is encouraging that a number of cities have recognized the imperative of offering paid leave benefits in the absence of nationwide


¹ “Family and Medical Leave Act - Wage and” <https://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/>. Accessed 24 May, 2019

² https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/2018-HRC-LGBTQ-Paid-Leave-Survey.pdf?_ga=2.195338661.800741352.1568654239-1505457067.1540225167, Page 10.

The Williams Institute. “New Patterns of Poverty in the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community.” <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGB-Poverty-Update-Jun-2013.pdf>

⁴ Out and Equal Workplace Advocates. “2017 Workplace Equality Fact Sheet.” <http://outandequal.org/2017-workplace-equality-fact-sheet>

⁵ The Williams Institute. “Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Discrimination in the Workplace: A Practice Guide.” <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/CH40-Discrimination-Against-LGBT-People-Sears-Mallory.pdf>



paid leave protections, these benefits may not always be inclusive of LGBTQ people, our diverse families, or our medical needs. Parental leave policies may not equally cover parents of all genders or those who become new parents through surrogacy, adoption,

or foster care. Other employer policies may restrict family care leave to legal guardians and their spouses, while failing to cover domestic partners, other close family members, and other primary caregivers for a child, senior, or person with a disability. Finally, in

the absence of guaranteed protections under the law, employers may offer paid leave as a benefit but deny individual paid leave requests, forcing employees to take unpaid time off, even when they are seeking medically necessary care.



Diverse Family Structures

For many LGBTQ people, some of whom face rejection from their biological or adoptive families, the term family takes on a broader meaning than that ascribed by most. Close friends, for instance, can be considered family and may provide support that traditionally comes from biological or adoptive families. Because of pervasive societal and familial discrimination, LGBTQ people are often more vulnerable during life's unexpected challenges and rely on diverse networks of support during leave-qualifying life events like severe illness. The individuals that form these diverse support networks—which include other family members,

friends, neighbors, or loved ones who share a deep bond similar to that of marriage, blood, or adoption—are sometimes called “**chosen family**.” According to HRC’s 2018 Paid Leave Survey, fifty-eight percent of respondents indicated that they anticipate needing to serve as caregiver for at least one chosen family member should they experience a serious health condition. Moreover, some LGBTQ people opt to enter into domestic partnerships with their significant others and many form families through various assisted reproductive technologies. All of these diverse family and family-forming structures should be accounted for in paid leave policies.

Benefits of Paid Leave

Enacting inclusive paid leave policies is not just the right thing to do. These policies also benefit employers. Inclusive paid leave helps municipalities attract top talent. Prospective employees, including prospective LGBTQ employees, value workplaces that demonstrate a commitment to the health and well-being of all employees

and their diverse families. Paid leave can also improve employee retention. By allowing city employees to take paid leave without jeopardizing their family’s financial security, municipal workers are able to provide vital care for themselves and their loved ones, ultimately leading to healthier, happier employees who are more likely to remain loyal. For

similar reasons, inclusive paid leave policies also contribute to higher productivity and employee morale. Taken together, the benefits associated with offering inclusive paid leave helps cities accomplish the central goal of effectively serving residents and visitors.

Creating Inclusive Paid Leave Policies

Municipalities should begin the process of adding paid leave to city employee benefits, taking care to account for the unique concerns of LGBTQ employees as well as their diverse family structures. If a city currently has a paid leave policy, city officials should review its terms to ensure its full inclusivity. The following principles should guide the creation or alteration of paid leave policies.

PAID LEAVE POLICIES SHOULD COVER:

- **PARENTAL LEAVE** to allow employees to welcome children into their families, including through childbirth, surrogacy, adoption, foster care, or other placement;
- **FAMILY CARE LEAVE** to enable employees to care for loved ones with serious medical conditions, including serving as a caregiver for a spouse, domestic partner, chosen family member, child, parent, or grandparent; and
- **MEDICAL LEAVE** to allow employees to manage their own health, including undergoing treatment for a serious health condition, recovering from a physical or mental illness, obtaining medically-necessary transition-related health care, and receiving HIV-related care.

PARENTAL LEAVE POLICIES

should utilize inclusive language and not focus solely on “birth mothers”

(e.g., maternity leave), which excludes fathers, non-birth mothers, and adoptive or foster parents, who are all equally deserving of the time needed to bond with a new child.

- Moreover, policies that offer additional time off and/or short-term disability for “birth mothers” to allow for physical recovery from childbirth may inadvertently leave out parents of other genders who may also give birth, including transgender men, non-binary individuals, and people of other identities. Policies should use the inclusive term “birth parent” instead.

FAMILY CARE LEAVE POLICIES

should define “spouse” to include all legal spouses, which includes spouses of the same-sex. Policies should also include both same- and different-sex domestic partners.

- Many American families—and especially LGBTQ families—have parental relationships and responsibilities that are outside of a legal and/or biological relationship. Municipalities should follow existing U.S. Department of Labor guidance for FMLA when offering paid or unpaid leave benefits, which allows all employees with parent-child relationships to claim parental and family care leave for one another, regardless of legal or biological standing.
- For a variety of reasons, there may be instances

where an employee must take time off to care for a seriously ill loved one outside of the relationships listed above, including a grandparent, relative, or close friend. LGBTQ people may be more likely to rely on and/or be responsible for care for such chosen family members, who may not have other immediate family who are able or willing to care for them. Family care leave policies should allow employees to access paid leave for the care of chosen family members.

MEDICAL LEAVE POLICIES

should expressly cover employees who are seeking paid leave to undergo medically-necessary transition-related care (like gender affirmation surgery, hormone therapy, and other gender-affirming care) and employees who need time off to receive HIV-related health care (including adjusting to new medications or grappling with co-infections).

Moreover, paid leave policies should offer full or partial wage replacement during leave and should be clearly outlined in city employee handbooks alongside other benefits and guidelines. Human resources staff should be prepared to answer questions regarding paid leave policies, and managers should be prepared to support their team members who need to take leave. Finally, employers should offer flexible work arrangements, including part-time or telework options, if an employee needs additional accommodations to manage their health or care for loved ones once their paid leave period ends.

Addressing Other Barriers to Accessing Paid Leave

As noted earlier, even where paid leave policies exist, LGBTQ employees may hesitate to request leave if the request has the potential of “outing” the employee. For example, employees may fear the stigma they may face if they reveal the need to take time off to care for a same-sex spouse or to receive HIV-related or transgender-specific health care. Due to a patchwork of local and state non-discrimination protections, and a lack of express federal protections, many “outed” employees may face the risk of being fired simply because of who they are.

Cities should take additional steps to ensure that employees are not at risk of adverse employment actions if paid leave requests have the potential of “outing” them. Municipalities should ensure that their city employment non-discrimination policies expressly cover sexual orientation and gender identity (which is assessed in Part II(A) of the MEI scorecard). City officials should also ensure that workers and their families are comprehensively protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, and public

spaces (assessed in Part I(A)-(C)). Furthermore, in order to foster a more inclusive and respectful workplace, all city employees should regularly undergo LGBTQ-inclusive diversity training (assessed in Part II(C) of the MEI scorecard) and municipalities should ensure that employee health care plans provide express coverage for medically-necessary transition-related care (including gender-affirming surgeries, hormone therapy, and related mental health care).

Conclusion

Although municipal employees have access to unpaid FMLA leave, unpaid leave is a luxury many city employees and their families simply cannot afford. LGBTQ people stand to uniquely benefit from job-secured paid leave, given that LGBTQ people are more likely to be living in poverty and more likely to be mistreated or discriminated against in the workplace. Cities and businesses are increasingly enacting inclusive paid leave policies because they realize that it is not only the right thing to do, but also beneficial to them

as employers. By allowing employees to take paid leave without jeopardizing their family's financial security or their long-term job security, municipal workers are able to provide vital care for themselves and their loved ones, ultimately leading to healthier, happier employees who are more likely to remain loyal, be productive, and report high levels of satisfaction. In crafting or updating paid leave policies, municipalities should be deliberate in utilizing inclusive language that takes into account the unique concerns of

LGBTQ employees and their diverse family structures. Moreover, cities should contemporaneously work to holistically safeguard LGBTQ employees and their families from discrimination in public and private employment, housing, and public spaces.

For more on this inclusive paid leave, see the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's report entitled "2018 U.S. Paid Family Leave Survey," available at www.hrc.org.

Fair Assessment Respects Legal Differences

The Municipal Equality Index is carefully designed to rate cities in detail while respecting that a number of factors may boost or inhibit a city's ability or incentives to adopt the laws and policies this project rates.

Given the range of authority and incentives that cities have, and acknowledging that our effort to rate small cities as well as large cities exacerbates these challenges, the MEI had to wrestle with three major questions in its initial design.

QUESTION 1

How could the MEI fairly take state law into account, particularly as the disparity between states with pro-equality laws and states without pro-equality laws continues to grow?

ANSWER

The answer is balance; the rating system would not be fair if cities were not able to score a 100 on the MEI without living in a state that had favorable state law. Allocating the points carefully to respect the dynamic relationship between state and local government was a must, and we concentrated on what the state law meant for the city being rated.

QUESTION 2

How could the MEI assess a list of cities as diverse as those selected while acknowledging that the smaller places rated may understandably have less capacity to engage on LGBTQ issues?

ANSWER

We addressed concerns about a small city's capacity to affect change by building flexibility into the scorecard through the use of bonus points and by providing multiple avenues toward earning points.

QUESTION 3

What do MEI scores say about the atmosphere for LGBTQ people living and working in a particular place?

ANSWER

This last point is to recognize that even the most thoughtful survey of laws and policies cannot objectively assess the efficacy of enforcement and it certainly cannot encapsulate the lived experience of discrimination that many LGBTQ people—even those living in 100-point cities—face every day.

This question can only be answered by precisely defining what the MEI is designed to do: the MEI is an evaluation of municipal laws and policies.

It is not a rating of the best places for LGBTQ people to live, nor is it an evaluation of the adequacy or effectiveness of enforcement.

It is not an encapsulation of what it feels like to be an LGBTQ person walking down the street. While some LGBTQ people may prefer to live in cities that respect and include them, there are undoubtedly many other factors that make a community a welcoming, inclusive place to live.

To be clear, the MEI specifically rates cities on their laws and policies while respecting the legal and political context the city operates within. It is not a measure of an LGBTQ person's lived experience in that city.

Even the most thoughtful survey of laws and policies **cannot encapsulate the lived experience of discrimination** that many LGBTQ people—even those living in 100-point cities—face every day.

Accounting for City Size

The MEI rates municipalities as small as Rehoboth Beach, Delaware (2010 population according to the US Census: 1,327) and as large as New York City (2010 population according to the US Census: 8,175,136). Such a range in city size creates concerns about ensuring that the efforts of small cities are not diminished in comparison to the capabilities of large cities.

Fairness dictates that the MEI not measure small cities against a standard only the metropolitan giants of the country can meet.

The MEI is designed to ensure that small cities have the same ability to score well on the MEI as large cities do.

First, while some of the criteria might be more challenging for a small city to accomplish, none of the non-bonus criteria are prohibitive for small cities. Further, flexibility was built into the scoring system to acknowledge that a small city may accomplish the criteria in a slightly different manner: for example, an LGBTQ liaison may have many other duties, and a Human Rights Commission might be all-volunteer.

Second, the MEI uses bonus points to ensure cities are not being held accountable for services that they simply are unable to provide. Points pertaining to a city's administrative structure and capabilities are generally bonus points and there often are multiple paths to earning the same set of points.

A city can earn "Inclusive Workplace" bonus points for LGBTQ-specific recruitment for city employment opportunities; however, if the city is too small to actively recruit, it can earn those same points either through an inclusive workplace diversity training or facilitating a Pride group for city employees.

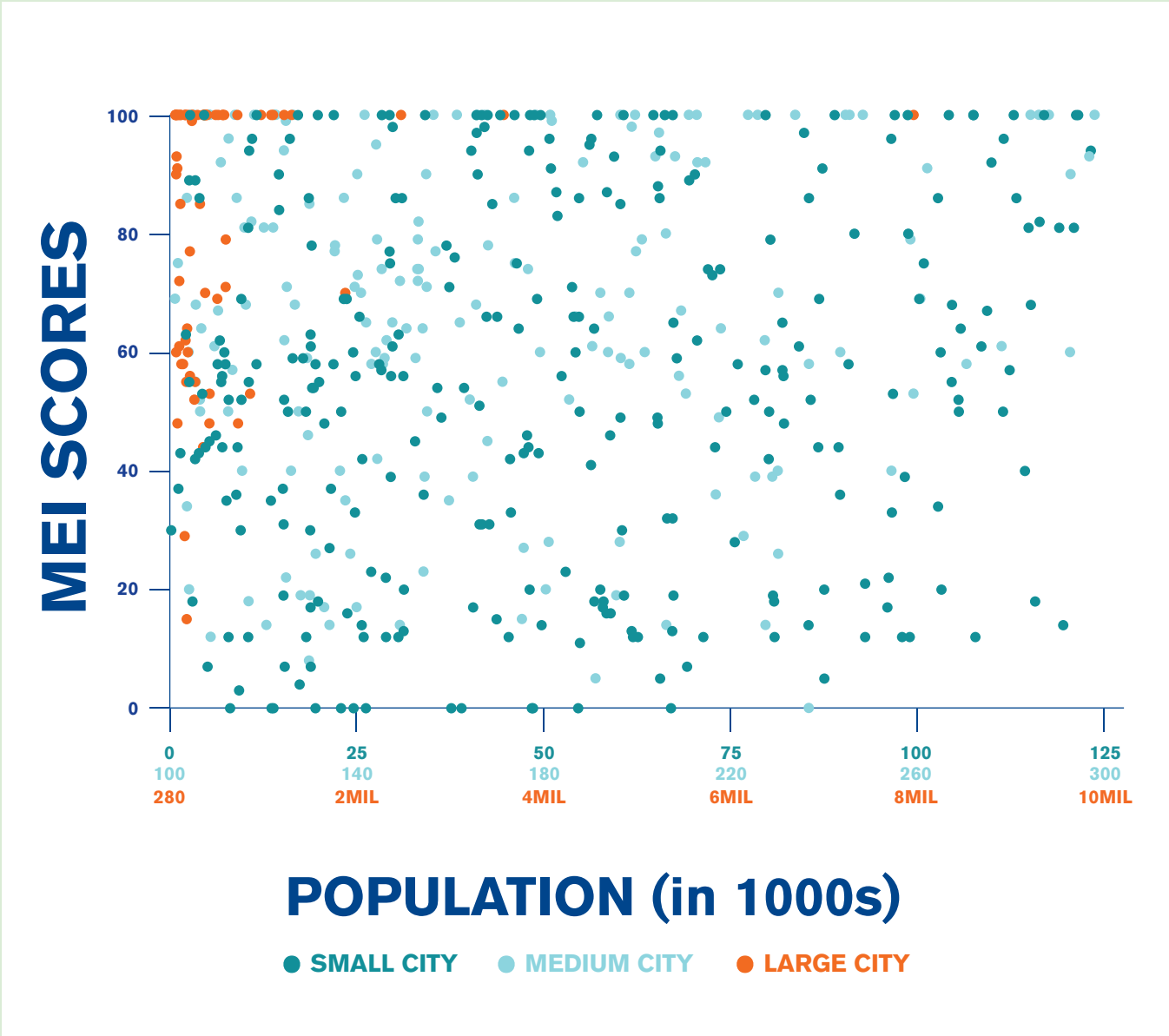
Having alternative paths to the same points and classifying some points as bonus accommodates the varying needs and capabilities of different sized cities.

An analysis of the MEI's results over the past several editions shows these efforts to accommodate small cities worked: small cities were able to score comparably with the large cities.

More than half of the cities rated qualify as "small", and these continue to be represented more or less proportionally across the range of scores, including perfect scores. In every edition the data has clearly showed that a city's score is not well predicted by its size.

Having **alternative paths** to the same points and classifying some points as bonus accommodates the varying needs and capabilities of different sized cities.

CITY SIZE NOT PREDICTIVE OF MEI SCORE



Balancing State and Local Laws

Cities are creations of the state. Cities are granted the power to govern by their states, and some states have multiple classes of cities that are invested with varying degrees of autonomy. Some cities are granted so much power that they have nearly complete independence, but other cities—particularly smaller cities—are more limited in the scope of their city government.

To be a worthwhile survey of cities across states, the MEI must be respectful of how different cities are from one another.

This is especially true when LGBTQ law is the subject being surveyed. Some cities are hampered from passing pro-equality laws by state law that limits their ability to do so; others come from states with strong pro-equality laws that ensure a high level of legal protections for all.

The MEI balances the influence of LGBTQ-inclusive state law by weighing state and local laws equally, and by not awarding double points to a city fortunate enough to have protections at both the state and local levels.

If a state has a comprehensive and inclusive non-discrimination law, a city may not be incentivized to pass an ordinance extending duplicative protections, but it should still have those protections reflected in its score.

Conversely, the city should be able to achieve a perfect score on the basis of municipal law alone—otherwise the MEI would not be a true evaluation of cities. The success of this balanced approach is demonstrated by a number of cities who were able to achieve perfect scores despite being in states that do not have pro-equality laws.



MEI ALL-STARS

High Scores in States Without Supportive Laws



Understanding Restrictive State Law

Some states restrict their cities from passing inclusive laws either by passing specific legislation that prohibits cities from doing so or through application of the Dillon’s Rule (which prevents cities from providing broader nondiscrimination protections than those offered under state law) to LGBTQ-inclusive legislation.

An example of restrictive legislation is a Tennessee law that prohibits municipalities from passing nondiscrimination ordinances that affect private employees. Because of these types of restrictions, not every city has the power to enact the types of legislation that the MEI measures.

Cities with a dedication to equality that are in Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina, for example, will never be able to score as well as cities with comparable dedication to equality that exist in states without the restrictive laws.

However, the MEI provides avenues for cities who are dedicated to equality—as some cities in Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee are—to have that commitment reflected in their score despite restrictive state law.

Bonus points are offered for testing the limits of these state restrictions, while standard points reflect city leadership advocating against the state restrictions.

These bonus points help to level the playing field for restricted cities; however, the small number of cities suffering such restrictions will find it extremely challenging—and, in some cases, perhaps impossible—to score a 100 on the MEI.

While this may initially appear to be at odds with the MEI’s purpose of evaluating what cities do, the bottom line is that these vital protections don’t exist for the folks who live and work in these cities. That these cities will face an uphill battle in earning points for certain criteria on the MEI is a reflection of the actual difficulties they face as a result of restrictive state law.

Ameliorating the effect of a restrictive state law on the MEI score would be a dishonest representation of the protections that the city truly does offer.

The MEI **provides avenues for cities that are dedicated to equality** to have that dedication reflected in their score despite restrictive state law.

SUCCESS STORY: EQUALITY VIRGINIA

For the past six years in Virginia, the Republican-controlled Senate has passed legislation to protect LGBTQ people from discrimination. However, despite strong support from the Republican caucus, the leadership in the House of Delegates has failed to do the same, thereby repeatedly preventing Virginia from passing statewide nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ people.



Due in part to the setbacks in the state legislature, advocates across the state have expressed increased interest in addressing these issues locally. We saw the MEI as a great place for these advocates to start. Equality Virginia sees the MEI not only as a tool to encourage local activism, but also to create more visibility for the LGBTQ community and build broader support for nondiscrimination protections at the state level.

A great example of the MEI being a tool for both advocacy and visibility occurred in Richmond just last year. When Mayor Stoney came into office, he saw many opportunities to improve the lives of LGBTQ residents and city employees. Some of his measures were symbolic, like flying Pride flags at Brown's Island and the downtown train station. Others were policy enhancements, such as working with City Council to establish a Human Rights Commission and nondiscrimination laws, designating a policy advisor to serve as the Mayor's LGBTQ Liaison, and offering transgender-inclusive health benefits for city employees.

These efforts did not go unnoticed. Before Mayor Stoney took office, Richmond's score on the MEI was 46 out of 100. Mayor Stoney remembers learning about the score in 2017 and feeling challenged to put major changes in place. He told his team, "We've got to do better; to be competitive in the New South we must lean into inclusivity." Within a year Richmond was able to increase its score to 94 – the highest MEI score in Virginia—and was named an MEI All-Star city for "boldly leading the way toward LGBTQ equality."

Inspired by this remarkable success, we look forward to other advocates and elected officials in Virginia following the lead of Richmond and other long-time leaders in the state like Arlington County and Alexandria.

**VEE LAMNECK, MSW
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
EQUALITY VIRGINIA**

Equality Virginia sees the MEI not only as a tool to encourage local activism, but also to create more visibility for the LGBTQ community and build broader support for nondiscrimination protections at the state level.

Effect of Enforcement and Lived Experience

The MEI is an encapsulation of the best practices of inclusion followed by cities nationwide. It is a blueprint for positive change and an opportunity for cities to become aware of best practices in municipal equality. It is not a ranking of the friendliest cities to live. It neither attempts to quantify how respectfully cities enforce their laws, nor does it try to gauge the experience of an LGBTQ person interacting with the police or city hall.

Fair and respectful implementation of the best practices described by the MEI is crucial if the policies are to have any meaning. Realistically, the MEI simply has no objective way of measuring the quality of enforcement. Even the most thoughtful survey of laws and policies cannot objectively assess the efficacy of enforcement and it certainly cannot encapsulate the lived experience of discrimination that many LGBTQ people—even those living in 100 point cities—face every day.

The MEI can make some limited, blunt judgments about the existence of enforcement, if not its quality. For example, one of the harder questions the MEI faces is evaluating how seriously police departments take anti-LGBTQ related violence. While the MEI awards points to cities that report hate crimes statistics to the FBI, it does not evaluate whether the report made by the police department to the FBI is an accurate reflection of hate crimes, whether detectives competently collected evidence related to proving a hate-related motivation for the violence or whether the police department created a safe space for victims to come forward. It doesn't measure how respectful police are when making a stop, nor how the police decide whom to stop.

Collecting and assessing such data in an objective, thorough way would be impossible. However, a city will not receive credit for reporting hate crimes if the city hasn't reported any hate crimes of any kind this year or for

five previous years. The MEI deems this effectively non-reporting because the probability is very low that a city truly experienced zero hate crimes of any kind in five years. While this is a judgment call, it is the best measure the MEI has to determine if hate crimes are being taken seriously at the local level.

A 100-point city, then, may have terrific policies—a well-trained police force, a police liaison, and consistent hate crimes reporting—but nevertheless be an atmosphere in which LGBTQ people have intense fear of tangling with the police department. This fear may be magnified for LGBTQ people of color or undocumented LGBTQ immigrants, and the MEI reflects discrimination against those populations in only a general way. On the other hand, a police department in a 40-point city could have none of these policies but have a reputation for fair and respectful enforcement. The MEI specifically rates cities on their laws and policies; it is not a measure of an LGBTQ person's lived experience in that city.

The MEI specifically rates cities on their laws and policies; it is not a measure of an LGBTQ person's **lived experience** in that city.





WHAT WE FOUND

SUCCESS STORY: STATE COLLEGE, PENNSYLVANIA

Our local protections against conversion therapy is more than just a local law. It's a message to the community—locally, nationally, and internationally—that everyone is loved and part of State College. That's the overall goal with all of our LGBTQ initiatives: to promote diversity and equality as social pillars of the community.



Protecting our youth from conversion therapy is not the only thing State College is doing to emphasize the importance of diversity and equality. State College created an Advisory

Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Matters to help further inclusivity by providing unique insights and ideas on what State College can do to improve its rating in the Municipal Equality Index. We're proud to offer protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, and public accommodations. And we're proud to have achieved a perfect MEI score for the first time this year.

Penn State University attracts a diverse population to our community and it's our duty to make these students and faculty feel welcomed. This past year we partnered with Penn State for Pride Month and hung rainbow banners from April until the end of June to ensure students attending the university had the opportunity to see these banners hanging in their community. All of our local accomplishments would not be possible without support from community members that volunteer on State College's LGBTQ Advisory Committee and our local elected officials.

**KEVIN KASSAB
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
MANAGER AND LGBTQ LIAISON**

Our local protections against conversion therapy is more than just a local law. It's a message to the community—locally, nationally, and internationally—that everyone is loved and part of State College.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

This year's report heralded the largest number of perfect-scoring cities in the MEI's eight year history. Since the first MEI was released in 2012, the number of 100-point cities has steadily risen each year. 88 cities now claim the maximum score of 100 points, up from 78 cities last year and just 11 in 2012. What's more, the national city average this year jumped to a record high of 60 points (up from 58 last year), marking the third year in a row that the national average has increased.

The 2019 MEI rates the same 506 cities for the fourth year in a row based on the same criteria as last year. Because the cities rated and criteria herein are identical to the previous report, key measures from this year's report directly and unequivocally demonstrate an unwavering, record-setting pro-equality trend.

LANDSCAPE OF MUNICIPAL EQUALITY

Cities all across the country understand their core duty to protect the health, safety, and well-being of residents by ensuring equality in housing, the workplace, and shared public spaces. City officials realize their unique position as the closest representatives of the people, best situated to make prompt legislative and policy changes for the betterment of everyone in their communities, including LGBTQ visitors, workers, and residents.

Citywide Protections

Despite another year of some state legislatures and the federal government working to stymie pro-equality progress, cities from coast to coast, representing all sizes and compositions, took decisive steps to protect residents from discrimination.

Norman, Oklahoma and Overland Park, Kansas enacted LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination ordinances covering private employment, housing, and public accommodations.

The number of cities that have local protections against so-called "conversion therapy"—harmful, discredited practices that attempt to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity—significantly increased over the past year. As of this report, 28 MEI-rated cities have local anti-conversion therapy protections in states with no state-level protections.

Moreover, public accommodations in 101 MEI-rated municipalities are required to make single-user restrooms available to people of all genders pursuant to city, county, and/or state law.

Municipal Employment, Services, and Programs

Cities are keenly aware that inclusive workplace policies help attract and retain the best and brightest employees. 408 cities (nearly 81% of all rated cities) now have equal employment opportunity policies that expressly include sexual orientation and/or gender identity, up by 30

over the past year. Additionally, 182 municipalities now require their contractors to have LGBTQ-inclusive employment nondiscrimination policies.

Last year, the MEI began assessing local laws and policies that prohibit bullying in all youth-serving city services, programs, and facilities. Just two years after this criterion was introduced, 25 cities have implemented these vital bullying prevention policies (up from 14 last year).

Transgender-Inclusive Health Care Benefits

Because transgender people are often denied coverage for medically necessary care, it is important for cities to explicitly affirm coverage for transition-related health care (including gender-affirming surgeries, hormone therapy, and related mental health care) in employee health care plans. The MEI has tracked the existence of transgender-inclusive city employee health care plans since its first edition. Of the 137 cities rated in the inaugural 2012 MEI, only 5 offered these vital benefits. Seven years later, that number has taken an impressive leap to 164 of 506 rated cities.

LGBTQ Representation in Municipal Government

Representation matters. In addition to ensuring that LGBTQ-related concerns are heard and addressed, LGBTQ liaisons in city executive offices and police departments signal to LGBTQ residents that they are seen, heard, and valued.

182 cities appointed LGBTQ city executive liaisons and 200 cities appointed LGBTQ police liaisons. Accounting for overlap, 216 cities—collectively home to 64 million people—have either an LGBTQ liaison in the city executive’s office or city police department, or both. This tops last year’s milestone of 191 cities with either liaison or both, covering 62 million people. And for a third year in a row, every perfect-scoring city had LGBTQ police liaisons. In keeping with findings from previous years, cities with LGBTQ liaisons scored significantly higher—nearly twice as high, in fact—than cities without LGBTQ liaisons.

Furthermore, direct representation in the form of openly-LGBTQ elected or appointed city officials sends a powerful message of hope to LGBTQ people, particularly LGBTQ youth. As of this report, 113 MEI-rated municipalities have an openly-LGBTQ elected or appointed city official.

EQUALITY ACROSS AMERICA

This year’s data confirms the fact that localities all over the country—small and large, red and blue—care deeply about creating truly inclusive communities through pro-equality laws, policies, and services.

The five most improved cities since the last MEI are:

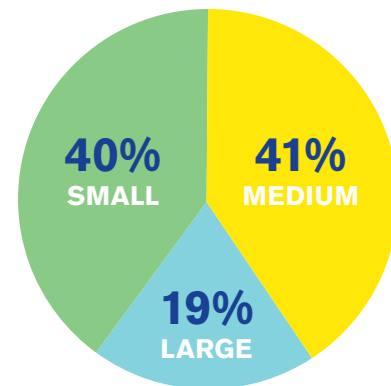
- Overland Park, Kansas, which increased its score by 54 points since last year;
- Norman, Oklahoma, which jumped 51 points since 2018;
- Racine, Wisconsin, which improved its score by 45 points over the past year;
- Gaithersburg, Maryland, which increased its score by 36 points since last year; and
- Green Bay, Wisconsin, which improved by 32 points.

Compared to 2018, 38 state averages increased and eight stayed the same.

- Cities in Kansas and Wisconsin increased by an average of 12 points.
- Cities in Maryland increased by an average of 9 points.
- Cities in Oklahoma and Virginia increased by an average of 8 points.

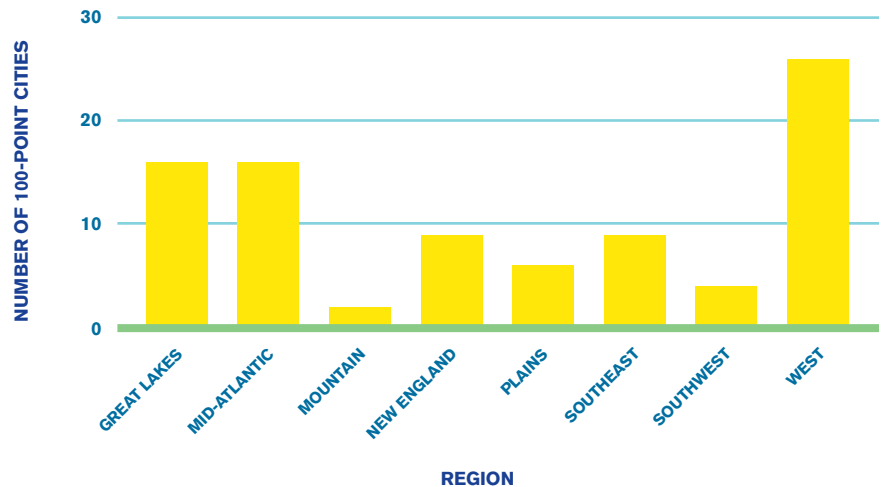
Of particular note is the finding that MEI-rated cities in every region of the country experienced mean score increases. Although small cities (populations below 100,000) averaged eight points below the national average, medium-sized cities (populations between 100,000 and 300,000) averaged five points above the national average. Large cities (populations above 300,000) ranked by the MEI had a mean score of 83 points. Interestingly, the vast majority (81%) of cities that scored above the national average were small and medium sized cities.

Cities that Scored Above the National Average

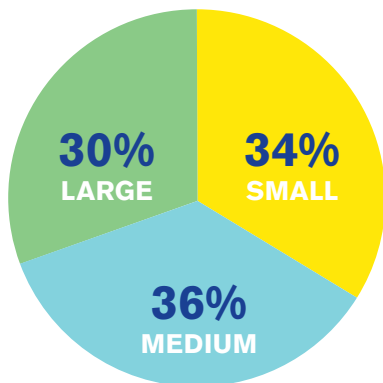


“All-Star” Cities—those that scored above eighty-five points despite being in a state with no state-level LGBTQ protections—hailed from nearly two-thirds of the thirty states that currently do not have comprehensive, fully-inclusive state protections. This eighth edition boasts 59 All-Star Cities, the largest number to date and an increase of 12 over last year. Similar to the size breakdown of cities that scored above the national average, large cities make up the smallest proportion of 2019 All-Star Cities.

Perfect Scores by Region



All-Star Cities by Size



See **MEI All Star Map** on Pg. 44

88 municipalities achieved a perfect score this year. This represents a remarkable eightfold increase in 100-point cities since the first edition of the MEI.

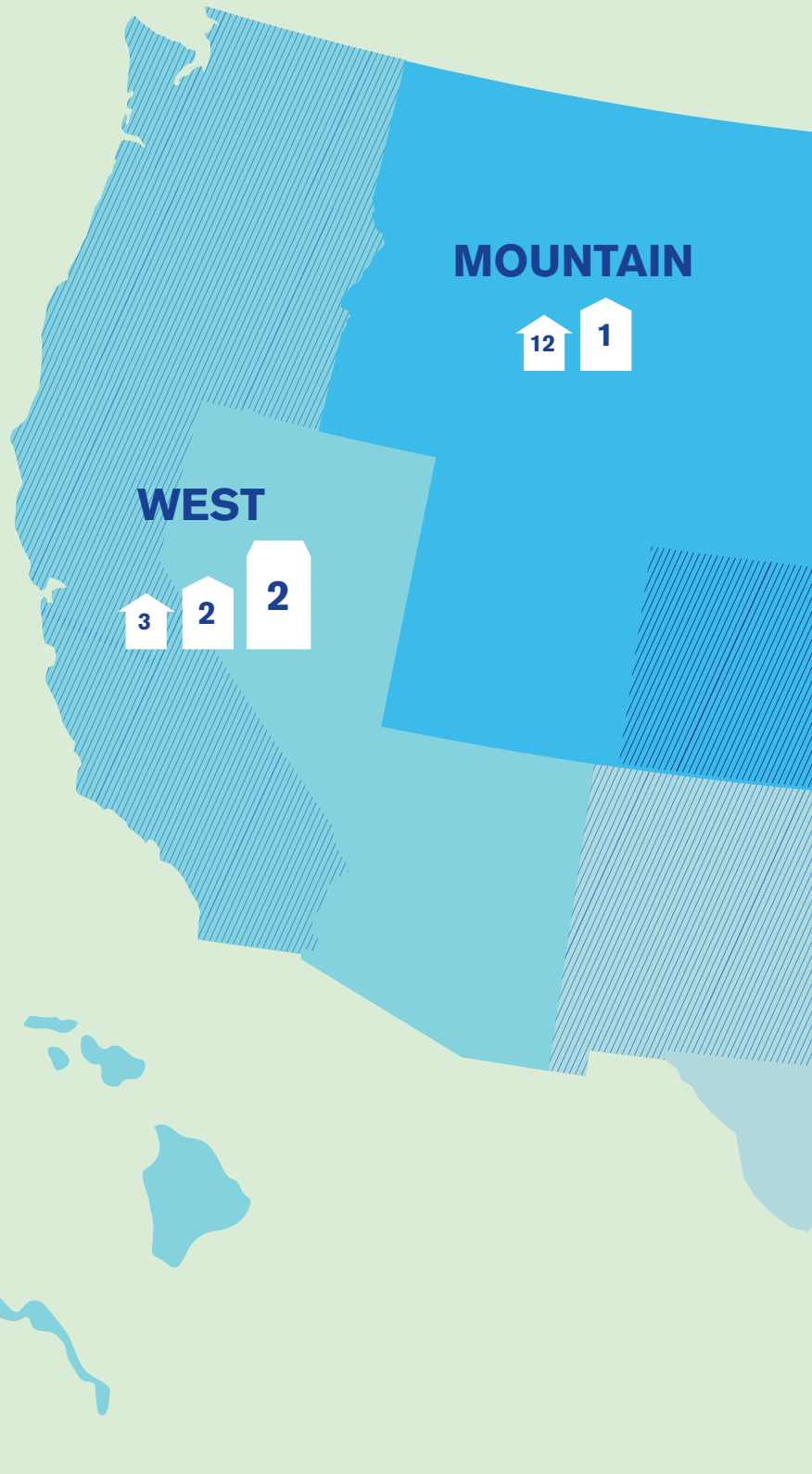
100-point localities come from every region of the country and span the wide spectrum of city size, demographics, and political leanings. This group is comprised of cities from 30 states, including municipalities in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas. The majority of these cities (26) are situated in the West. However, the highest proportion of 100s to cities rated is the Great Lakes region, with 31% of cities rated in this region attaining the MEI’s highest score. What’s more, small and medium-sized cities together comprise the majority (60%) of perfect scoring cities.

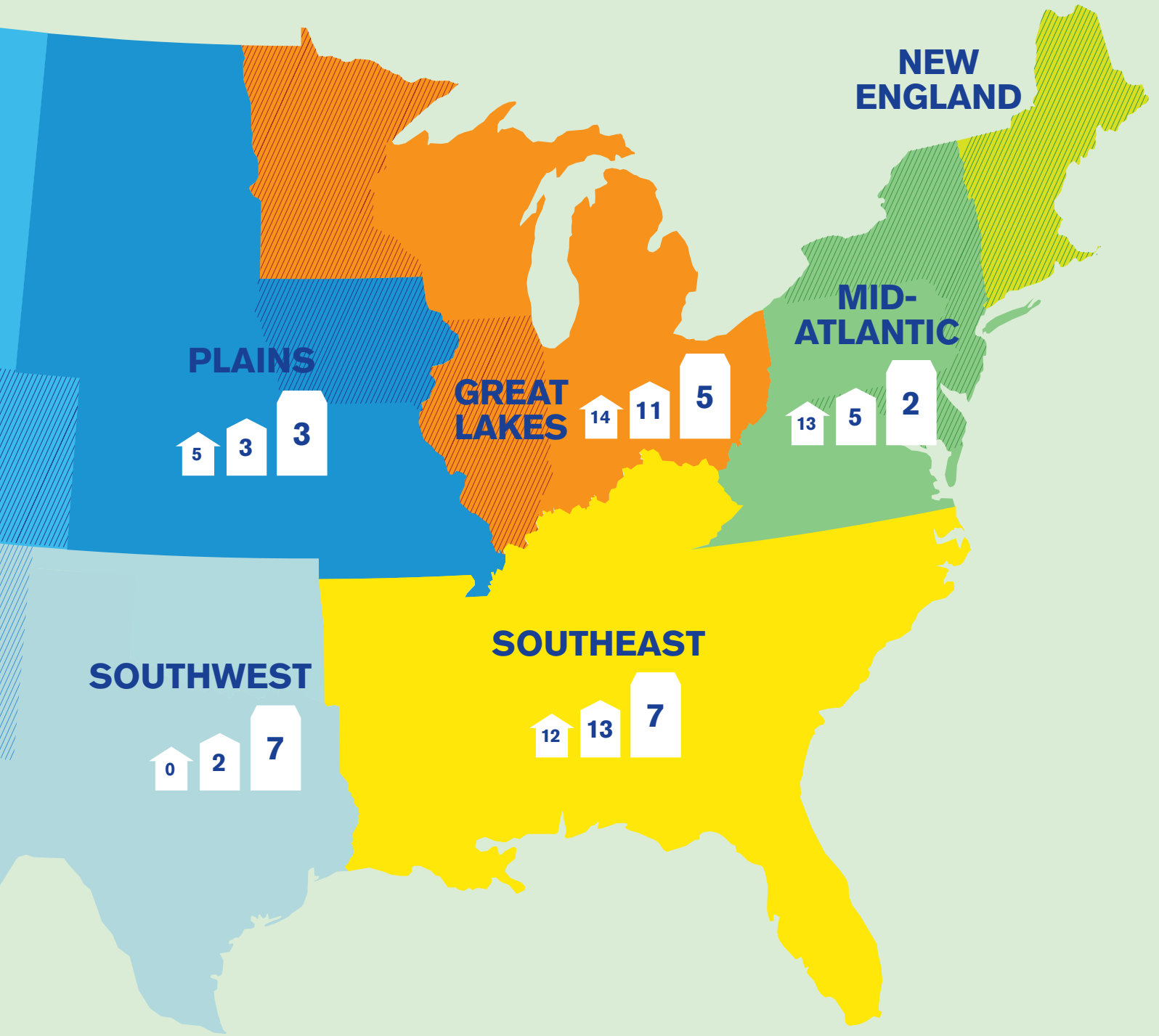
CONCLUSION

Eight years into this colossal endeavor, the MEI observes an eighth consecutive year of local officials courageously leading the way on LGBTQ equality. Even against a backdrop of some states and the federal government working to roll back vital protections, city leaders are working tirelessly to ensure that their constituents—friends, family members, and neighbors—can secure housing, make a living, and participate in community life without being discriminated against because of who they are. These local officials know that extending legal protections to everyone, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, is both the right thing to do and the smart way to govern. A city’s commitment to diversity and inclusion is a key driver of economic success, serving to attract residents, visitors, and businesses who place a high value on inclusivity.

EQUALITY ACROSS AMERICA

122 MEI cities have local LGBTQ non-discrimination protections that go beyond state law.





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STATE	CITY	I. Non-Discrimination Laws	II. Municipality as Employer	III. Municipal Services	IV. Law Enforcement	V. Leadership on LGBTQ Equality	STANDARD POINTS	BONUS POINTS	FINAL SCORE
ALABAMA	Auburn	○	◐	◐	○	○	21	2	23
	Birmingham	●	◐	●	●	●	94	8	100
	Florence	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Hoover	○	○	○	◐	○	12	0	12
	Huntsville	○	◐	◐	○	◐	20	0	20
	Mobile	◐	○	◐	○	○	17	2	19
	Montgomery	○	◐	○	○	◐	12	2	14
	Tuscaloosa	○	◐	○	◐	◐	34	2	36
ALASKA	Anchorage	●	◐	●	◐	●	88	2	90
	Fairbanks	○	◐	◐	○	◐	20	0	20
	Homer	○	○	○	○	◐	5	2	7
	Juneau	●	◐	◐	●	●	84	2	86
	Ketchikan	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Sitka	●	○	○	○	◐	36	0	36
	Wasilla	○	○	○	◐	○	12	0	12
ARIZONA	Avondale	○	○	◐	●	○	27	1	28
	Chandler	○	◐	●	●	◐	56	2	58
	Flagstaff	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	81	7	88
	Gilbert	○	◐	●	●	◐	56	0	56
	Glendale	○	◐	◐	●	◐	60	2	62
	Mesa	○	◐	◐	●	◐	54	2	56
	Peoria	○	◐	◐	◐	○	22	1	23
	Phoenix	◐	●	●	●	●	96	11	100
	Scottsdale	○	◐	◐	●	◐	53	11	64
	Tempe	●	●	●	●	●	100	9	100
	Tucson	●	◐	◐	●	●	93	11	100
ARKANSAS	Conway	○	◐	○	○	◐	16	0	16
	Eureka Springs	●	◐	◐	○	●	60	3	63
	Fayetteville	○	◐	◐	◐	●	39	5	44
	Fort Smith	○	○	○	◐	○	12	2	14
	Jonesboro	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Little Rock	○	◐	◐	●	●	61	5	66
	North Little Rock	○	○	○	◐	◐	13	0	13
Springdale	○	◐	○	○	○	7	0	7	

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		I. Non-Discrimination	II. Municipality as Employer	III. Services and Programs	IV. Law Enforcement	V. Leadership on LGBTQ Community			
CALIFORNIA	Anaheim	●	◐	◑	◑	◑	77	8	85
	Bakersfield	●	◐	◑	◑	○	54	4	58
	Berkeley	●	◐	◑	◑	●	83	13	96
	Brisbane	●	◐	○	◑	○	49	4	53
	Cathedral City	●	●	◑	◑	●	81	15	96
	Chula Vista	●	◐	◑	●	◑	89	11	100
	Concord	●	◐	◑	◑	◐	69	12	81
	Corona	●	◑	○	◑	○	55	4	59
	Elk Grove	●	◐	◑	◑	◑	78	4	82
	Escondido	●	◑	○	◑	○	55	5	60
	Fontana	●	◑	○	◑	○	55	4	59
	Fremont	●	◐	●	◑	◑	81	11	92
	Fresno	●	◐	○	◑	○	50	5	55
	Fullerton	●	◐	◑	◑	○	73	4	77
	Garden Grove	●	○	◑	◑	◐	49	6	55
	Glendale	●	◑	◑	◑	◑	65	5	70
	Guerneville (Sonoma County)	●	●	◑	●	◑	91	13	100
	Hayward	●	◐	◑	◑	◑	75	4	79
	Huntington Beach	●	◐	◑	◑	○	54	7	61
	Irvine	●	◑	●	●	◑	83	9	92
	Lancaster	●	◑	◑	●	◐	73	4	77
	Long Beach	●	●	●	●	●	100	11	100
	Los Angeles	●	◐	◑	●	●	93	15	100
	Modesto	●	◐	◑	◑	◐	55	5	60
	Moreno Valley	●	◑	○	◑	○	56	4	60
	Oakland	●	◐	◑	●	◑	92	13	100
	Oceanside	●	◐	◑	●	◑	89	14	100
	Ontario	●	◐	○	◑	○	48	4	52
	Orange	●	◐	◑	◑	○	67	4	71
	Oxnard	●	◐	◑	◑	○	54	4	58
	Palm Desert	●	◐	◑	●	◑	83	11	94
	Palm Springs	●	●	◑	●	●	98	17	100
	Palmdale	●	◐	◑	◑	○	69	5	74
	Pasadena	●	◐	◑	◑	◑	77	9	86
Pomona	●	◐	○	◑	○	68	4	72	
Rancho Cucamonga	●	◐	○	◑	○	62	6	68	
Rancho Mirage	●	◐	◑	●	◑	87	16	100	

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		I. Non-Discrimination Laws	II. Municipality as Employer	III. Municipal Services	IV. Law Enforcement	V. Leadership on LGBTQ Equality			
CALIFORNIA	Richmond	●	◐	●	◐	◐	80	6	86
	Riverside	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	86	5	91
	Sacramento	●	●	◐	●	◐	91	15	100
	Salinas	●	◐	○	◐	○	60	4	64
	San Bernardino	●	○	◐	◐	○	49	4	53
	San Diego	●	●	◐	●	●	95	11	100
	San Francisco	●	●	●	●	●	100	17	100
	San Jose	●	◐	●	●	●	98	6	100
	Santa Ana	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	57	4	61
	Santa Clarita	●	◐	◐	●	○	70	4	74
	Santa Monica	●	●	◐	●	●	98	7	100
	Santa Rosa	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	71	7	78
	Signal Hill	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	80	16	96
	Stockton	●	◐	○	◐	○	56	4	60
	Sunnyvale	●	◐	○	◐	◐	68	5	73
	Thousand Oaks	●	◐	○	◐	◐	63	5	68
	Torrance	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	54	4	58
	Vallejo	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	77	4	81
Visalia	●	◐	○	◐	◐	58	4	62	
West Hollywood	●	●	◐	●	●	98	17	100	
COLORADO	Aspen	●	◐	○	◐	○	56	6	62
	Aurora	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	69	3	72
	Boulder	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	81	15	96
	Colorado Springs	●	◐	◐	◐	○	57	3	60
	Denver	●	◐	●	●	●	98	9	100
	Fort Collins	●	◐	◐	●	◐	88	7	95
	Lakewood	●	◐	○	◐	○	56	2	58
	Littleton	●	◐	○	◐	○	49	2	51
CONNECTICUT	Bridgeport	◐	○	○	◐	◐	40	2	42
	Fairfield	◐	◐	○	◐	◐	44	2	46
	Hartford	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	89	10	99
	New Britain	◐	◐	◐	◐	●	67	6	73
	New Haven	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	79	6	85
	Norwalk	◐	◐	●	●	◐	83	14	97
	Stamford	◐	●	●	●	●	94	6	100
	Storrs (Mansfield)	◐	◐	○	◐	○	50	2	52

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		I. Non-Discrimination	II. Municipality as Employer	III. Services and Programs	IV. Law Enforcement	V. Leadership on LGBTQ Community			
CONNECTICUT	Waterbury	●	●	●	●	○	63	4	67
DELAWARE	Bethany Beach	●	●	○	○	○	35	2	37
	Dover	●	●	●	●	○	52	2	54
	Middletown	●	○	○	○	○	28	2	30
	Milford	●	●	○	●	○	67	2	69
	Newark	●	●	○	●	○	54	2	56
	Rehoboth Beach	●	●	○	●	○	54	4	58
	Smyrna	●	○	○	●	○	40	3	43
	Wilmington	●	●	●	●	●	83	7	90
FLORIDA	Cape Coral	○	●	○	●	●	38	1	39
	Coral Gables	●	●	●	●	○	74	1	75
	Daytona Beach	●	○	○	○	○	30	0	30
	Fort Lauderdale	●	●	●	●	●	100	7	100
	Gainesville	●	●	●	●	●	88	6	94
	Hialeah	●	●	●	○	○	39	0	39
	Hollywood	●	●	●	●	●	68	2	70
	Jacksonville	●	●	●	●	●	79	0	79
	Miami	●	●	●	●	○	52	3	55
	Miami Shores	●	●	●	●	●	80	1	81
	Oakland Park	●	●	●	●	●	88	9	97
	Orlando	●	●	●	●	●	98	14	100
	Pembroke Pines	●	●	●	●	●	68	3	71
	Port Saint Lucie	○	●	○	●	○	37	2	39
	St. Petersburg	●	●	●	●	●	97	14	100
	Tallahassee	●	●	●	●	●	90	9	99
	Tampa	●	●	●	●	●	92	13	100
	Wilton Manors	●	●	●	●	●	94	15	100
GEORGIA	Athens-Clarke	○	●	●	●	○	35	5	40
	Atlanta	●	●	●	●	●	100	7	100
	Augusta-Richmond	○	●	○	●	○	28	0	28
	Avondale Estates	○	●	○	○	○	18	0	18
	Columbus	○	●	●	●	○	59	2	61
	Decatur	○	●	●	●	○	54	0	54
	North Druid Hills	○	●	○	○	○	7	0	7
	Roswell	○	○	○	○	○	5	0	5

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GEORGIA	Sandy Springs						21	0	21
	Savannah						38	2	40
HAWAII	Hawaii County						50	2	52
	Honolulu County						46	2	48
	Kalawao County						28	2	30
	Kauai County						30	2	32
	Maui County						48	2	50
IDAHO	Boise						80	0	80
	Coeur d'Alene						66	0	66
	Idaho Falls						41	0	41
	Meridian						50	0	50
	Moscow						68	1	69
	Nampa						18	0	18
	Pocatello						71	0	71
ILLINOIS	Aurora						64	6	70
	Carbondale						38	4	42
	Champaign						72	7	79
	Chicago						93	11	100
	Joliet						61	4	65
	Naperville						61	4	65
	Peoria						68	4	72
	Rockford						75	4	79
	Springfield						63	5	68
INDIANA	Bloomington						100	6	100
	Evansville						80	2	82
	Fort Wayne						40	0	40
	Hammond						71	0	71
	Indianapolis						86	3	89
	Muncie						69	0	69
	South Bend						75	2	77
	Terre Haute						42	0	42
	West Lafayette						85	0	85

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IOWA	Ames	●	●	●	●	●	81	6	87
	Cedar Rapids	●	●	●	●	●	100	2	100
	Davenport	●	●	●	●	●	78	2	80
	Des Moines	●	●	●	●	●	93	0	93
	Dubuque	●	●	●	●	●	95	5	100
	Iowa City	●	●	●	●	●	100	12	100
	Sioux City	●	●	●	○	●	55	2	57
	Waterloo	●	●	●	○	○	59	0	59
	West Des Moines	●	●	●	●	●	92	3	95
KANSAS	Emporia	○	●	●	●	○	33	0	33
	Hutchinson	○	●	●	●	○	31	0	31
	Kansas City	●	●	●	○	●	57	2	59
	Lawrence	●	●	●	○	●	61	8	69
	Manhattan	●	●	●	●	●	81	2	83
	Olathe	○	●	●	●	●	37	3	40
	Overland Park	●	●	●	●	●	83	3	86
	Topeka	○	●	●	●	●	47	3	50
	Wichita	○	●	○	●	○	29	0	29
KENTUCKY	Berea	○	●	●	●	●	35	0	35
	Bowling Green	○	○	●	●	●	20	0	20
	Covington	●	●	●	●	●	89	5	94
	Frankfort	●	●	●	●	●	64	2	66
	Lexington	●	●	●	●	●	86	7	93
	Louisville	●	●	●	●	●	96	5	100
	Morehead	●	●	●	●	○	55	0	55
	Owensboro	○	○	●	●	●	18	0	18
LOUISIANA	Alexandria	○	●	●	●	●	39	4	43
	Baton Rouge	○	●	●	●	●	34	6	40
	Lafayette	○	●	○	○	○	14	0	14
	Lake Charles	○	●	●	○	○	12	0	12
	Metairie	○	●	○	●	○	26	0	26
	Monroe	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	New Orleans	●	●	●	●	●	98	8	100
	Shreveport	●	●	●	●	●	77	0	77

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MAINE	Auburn	●	●	○	●	●	46	4	50
	Augusta	●	●	○	●	●	46	8	54
	Bangor	●	●	○	○	●	40	5	45
	Brunswick	●	●	○	○	○	33	4	37
	Lewiston	●	●	○	●	○	45	4	49
	Orono	●	○	○	○	○	26	4	30
	Portland	●	●	●	●	●	89	5	94
	Scarborough	●	●	○	●	○	54	9	63
	South Portland	●	●	○	●	○	52	4	56
MARYLAND	Annapolis	●	●	●	●	●	72	4	76
	Baltimore	●	●	●	●	●	94	6	100
	Bowie	●	●	●	●	○	56	4	60
	College Park	●	●	●	●	●	77	9	86
	Columbia	●	●	●	●	●	90	12	100
	Frederick	●	●	●	●	●	96	4	100
	Gaithersburg	●	●	●	●	●	87	6	93
	Hagerstown	●	●	●	●	●	52	2	54
	Rockville	●	●	●	●	●	100	8	100
	Towson	●	●	●	●	●	82	4	86
MASSACHUSETTS	Amherst	●	●	●	●	●	71	7	78
	Arlington	●	●	●	●	●	92	8	100
	Boston	●	●	●	●	●	100	8	100
	Cambridge	●	●	●	●	●	100	14	100
	Lowell	●	●	○	●	○	48	2	50
	Northampton	●	●	●	●	●	94	10	100
	Provincetown	●	●	●	●	●	94	8	100
	Salem	●	●	●	●	●	100	4	100
	Springfield	●	●	○	●	●	68	6	74
	Worcester	●	●	●	●	●	94	6	100
MICHIGAN	Ann Arbor	●	●	●	●	●	100	5	100
	Detroit	●	●	●	●	●	95	11	100
	East Lansing	●	●	●	●	●	98	8	100
	Ferndale	●	●	●	●	●	93	10	100
	Grand Rapids	●	●	●	●	●	90	2	92
	Kalamazoo	●	●	●	●	●	72	2	74

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MICHIGAN	Lansing	●	◐	●	●	◐	84	2	86
	Pleasant Ridge	●	◐	○	◐	◐	55	0	55
	Sterling Heights	◐	○	○	○	◐	8	0	8
	Traverse City	●	◐	◐	●	◐	82	2	84
	Warren	◐	○	○	◐	○	14	0	14
MINNESOTA	Bloomington	◐	◐	◐	◐	○	48	0	48
	Duluth	◐	◐	●	●	◐	80	6	86
	Eden Prairie	◐	◐	◐	◐	○	49	0	49
	Minneapolis	●	◐	●	●	●	98	4	100
	Mnetonka	◐	◐	○	◐	○	43	0	43
	Rochester	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	60	4	64
	Saint Cloud	◐	◐	◐	◐	○	48	0	48
	Saint Paul	◐	●	●	●	●	99	3	100
MISSISSIPPI	Bay St. Louis	○	○	○	○	◐	3	0	3
	Biloxi	○	○	○	◐	◐	15	0	15
	Gulfport	○	○	○	◐	◐	13	0	13
	Hattiesburg	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	33	0	33
	Jackson	●	◐	◐	◐	●	75	0	75
	Ocean Springs	○	○	○	○	◐	4	0	4
	Oxford	○	◐	○	○	◐	17	0	17
	Southaven	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Starkville	○	◐	○	○	◐	16	0	16
MISSOURI	Cape Girardeau	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Columbia	◐	◐	●	●	●	95	9	100
	Independence	○	○	◐	◐	◐	18	0	18
	Jefferson City	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	31	0	31
	Kansas City	◐	◐	●	●	●	90	9	99
	Springfield	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	33	2	35
	St. Charles	◐	◐	◐	●	○	49	0	49
	St. Louis	●	◐	●	●	●	98	8	100
MONTANA	Billings	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	20	0	20
	Bozeman	●	◐	○	◐	◐	75	3	78
	Butte-Silver Bow	●	◐	○	○	○	36	0	36
	Great Falls	○	◐	○	◐	○	18	0	18

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MONTANA	Helena	●	●	○	●	●	58	0	58
	Kalispell	○	●	○	●	○	18	0	18
	Missoula	●	●	●	●	●	93	8	100
	Whitefish	●	●	○	●	●	57	1	58
NEBRASKA	Bellevue	○	●	○	○	○	14	0	14
	Fremont	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Grand Island	○	●	○	●	●	20	0	20
	Kearney	○	○	○	●	○	12	0	12
	Lincoln	○	●	●	●	●	49	4	53
	North Platte	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Omaha	●	●	●	●	●	64	0	64
NEVADA	Carson City	●	●	○	○	○	48	2	50
	Elko	●	●	○	○	○	48	2	50
	Enterprise	●	●	●	●	●	91	10	100
	Henderson	●	●	●	●	●	77	2	79
	Las Vegas	●	●	●	●	●	87	15	100
	Mesquite	●	○	○	○	●	29	2	31
	North Las Vegas	●	●	○	●	○	47	2	49
	Paradise	●	●	●	●	●	91	10	100
	Reno	●	●	●	●	●	96	16	100
Sparks	●	●	○	○	○	42	2	44	
NEW HAMPSHIRE	Concord	●	●	○	●	○	64	2	66
	Derry	●	●	○	●	○	56	2	58
	Dover	●	●	●	●	●	59	2	61
	Durham	●	●	●	●	●	86	4	90
	Keene	●	●	●	●	●	65	4	69
	Manchester	●	●	○	●	●	59	2	61
	Nashua	●	●	○	○	●	50	2	52
	Plymouth	●	○	○	●	○	42	2	44
	Portsmouth	●	●	○	○	●	44	4	48
	Rochester	●	●	○	○	○	37	2	39
NEW JERSEY	Asbury Park	●	●	●	●	●	92	4	96
	Elizabeth	●	●	●	●	○	69	2	71

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NEW JERSEY	Hoboken	●	◐	◐	●	●	91	12	100
	Jersey City	●	◐	●	●	●	98	7	100
	Lambertville	●	◐	◐	◐	●	79	7	86
	Montclair	●	◐	◐	●	◐	68	3	71
	New Brunswick	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	64	2	66
	Newark	●	◐	○	◐	●	59	2	61
	Ocean Grove	●	◐	●	●	◐	82	7	89
	Paterson	●	◐	○	◐	◐	60	2	62
	Princeton	●	◐	●	●	●	96	8	100
	Trenton	●	◐	◐	◐	○	55	6	61
NEW MEXICO	Albuquerque	◐	◐	●	◐	◐	72	13	85
	Eldorado at Santa Fe	◐	◐	○	○	○	42	4	46
	Farmington	◐	○	◐	○	◐	38	4	42
	Gallup	◐	◐	○	○	○	33	4	37
	Las Cruces	◐	◐	○	○	◐	44	9	53
	Rio Rancho	◐	◐	○	○	○	40	4	44
	Roswell	◐	◐	○	○	○	40	4	44
	Santa Fe	◐	◐	○	○	●	56	9	65
NEW YORK	Albany	●	◐	●	●	●	98	13	100
	Brookhaven	●	◐	◐	◐	○	50	2	52
	Buffalo	●	●	◐	◐	●	85	6	91
	Ithaca	●	●	◐	●	●	93	5	98
	New York	●	●	●	●	●	100	17	100
	Northwest Harbor	●	◐	◐	○	○	40	2	42
	Rochester	●	●	◐	●	●	93	9	100
	Syracuse	●	◐	◐	○	●	65	9	74
	White Plains	●	◐	●	●	◐	92	4	96
	Yonkers	●	◐	●	●	◐	97	6	100
NORTH CAROLINA	Carrboro	○	◐	●	●	●	58	12	70
	Cary	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Chapel Hill	○	◐	◐	●	●	62	16	78
	Charlotte	○	◐	◐	●	●	57	7	64
	Durham	○	◐	●	●	◐	60	9	69
	Fayetteville	○	◐	◐	◐	○	37	2	39
	Greensboro	○	◐	●	●	●	64	15	79

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NORTH CAROLINA	Raleigh	○	◐	◑	◑	◑	51	7	58
	Wilmington	○	○	○	◑	◑	15	0	15
	Winston-Salem	○	◐	●	●	◑	45	7	52
NORTH DAKOTA	Bismarck	○	○	◑	◑	◐	19	0	19
	Fargo	○	◐	◑	●	◑	42	13	55
	Grand Forks	◐	◑	◑	●	◑	56	0	56
	Jamestown	○	◐	○	○	○	7	0	7
	Mandan	○	○	○	◑	○	12	0	12
	Minot	○	○	◑	◑	○	17	0	17
	West Fargo	○	◐	○	◑	○	14	0	14
OHIO	Akron	●	◐	●	●	●	92	8	100
	Cincinnati	●	◐	◑	●	●	96	14	100
	Cleveland	●	◐	●	●	●	94	9	100
	Columbus	●	◐	●	●	●	98	9	100
	Dayton	●	◐	●	●	◑	97	4	100
	Dublin	○	◐	○	○	◑	31	0	31
	Lakewood	●	◐	◑	◑	●	83	4	87
	Toledo	●	◐	●	●	●	94	9	100
OKLAHOMA	Broken Arrow	○	○	○	◑	○	12	0	12
	Edmond	○	◐	○	◑	○	19	0	19
	Lawton	○	○	◑	◑	○	17	0	17
	Moore	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Norman	●	◐	●	●	●	92	0	92
	Oklahoma City	◐	◐	◑	◑	◑	41	3	44
	Stillwater	○	○	○	◑	○	12	0	12
	Tulsa	◐	◑	●	◑	●	56	6	62
OREGON	Ashland	●	◐	○	◑	○	49	6	55
	Bend	●	◑	○	◑	○	56	2	58
	Corvallis	◐	◑	◑	◑	◐	62	4	66
	Eugene	◐	●	●	●	◑	98	5	100
	Gresham	◐	◐	○	◑	○	66	2	68
	Hillsboro	◐	◑	○	◑	○	54	4	58
	Portland	●	●	◐	●	●	98	8	100
	Salem	◐	◐	●	●	◑	88	2	90

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PENNSYLVANIA	Allentown	●	◐	●	●	●	98	8	100
	Carlisle	●	◐	●	●	●	86	0	86
	Erie	◐	◐	●	◐	◐	73	2	75
	Harrisburg	●	◐	◐	○	◐	66	3	69
	New Hope	●	◐	●	●	●	86	3	89
	Philadelphia	●	◐	●	●	●	98	16	100
	Pittsburgh	●	●	●	●	●	100	11	100
	Reading	●	◐	●	●	◐	89	2	91
	State College	●	◐	●	●	●	94	8	100
	Wilkes-Barre	●	◐	●	●	●	86	4	90
RHODE ISLAND	Cranston	◐	◐	○	◐	◐	55	2	57
	East Providence	◐	◐	○	◐	◐	62	2	64
	Kingston	◐	◐	○	◐	○	54	2	56
	Narragansett	◐	◐	○	○	○	48	2	50
	Newport	◐	◐	○	◐	◐	55	5	60
	Pawtucket	◐	◐	○	◐	◐	60	2	62
	Providence	●	●	●	●	●	100	6	100
	Warwick	◐	◐	○	●	◐	61	4	65
SOUTH CAROLINA	Charleston	◐	◐	◐	●	●	73	8	81
	Clemson	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Columbia	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	59	0	59
	Greenville	○	○	◐	◐	○	17	0	17
	Mount Pleasant	◐	○	○	◐	○	32	0	32
	Myrtle Beach	○	○	◐	◐	◐	23	0	23
	North Charleston	◐	○	◐	◐	◐	31	2	33
	Rock Hill	○	○	◐	○	○	5	0	5
SOUTH DAKOTA	Aberdeen	○	○	○	◐	○	12	0	12
	Brookings	●	◐	●	●	●	98	4	100
	Mitchell	○	○	○	◐	○	12	0	12
	Pierre	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Rapid City	○	○	◐	◐	○	19	0	19
	Sioux Falls	○	◐	●	●	◐	60	4	64
	Spearfish	○	◐	○	◐	○	19	0	19
	Vermillion	○	◐	●	●	◐	53	2	55
	Watertown	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	27	0	27

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TENNESSEE	Chattanooga	○	◐	◑	◑	●	45	0	45
	Clarksville	○	○	◑	◑	○	17	0	17
	Franklin	○	○	○	◑	○	12	0	12
	Johnson City	○	○	○	◑	○	12	0	12
	Knoxville	○	◐	◑	●	◐	53	7	60
	Memphis	○	◐	◑	●	◐	45	3	48
	Murfreesboro	○	○	○	◑	○	12	0	12
	Nashville	○	◐	●	●	●	62	8	70
TEXAS	Amarillo	○	○	◑	○	○	5	0	5
	Arlington	○	◐	◑	◐	◐	50	8	58
	Austin	●	●	●	●	●	100	11	100
	Brownsville	○	◐	○	○	◐	15	0	15
	College Station	○	○	○	◑	○	12	0	12
	Corpus Christi	○	◐	◑	●	◑	46	2	48
	Dallas	◐	●	◑	●	●	89	12	100
	Denton	○	◐	◐	●	◐	53	4	57
	El Paso	◐	◐	◑	◑	◑	48	5	53
	Fort Worth	●	◐	●	●	◐	91	9	100
	Garland	○	○	○	◑	○	12	2	14
	Grand Prairie	○	◐	○	◑	○	27	0	27
	Houston	○	◐	◑	●	●	57	13	70
	Irving	○	◐	◑	◑	◑	36	0	36
	Killeen	○	◐	○	◑	○	19	0	19
	Laredo	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Lubbock	○	◐	○	◑	○	26	0	26
	McAllen	○	◐	○	◑	○	19	0	19
	McKinney	○	◐	○	◑	○	26	0	26
	Mesquite	○	◐	○	○	◑	17	0	17
	Pasadena	○	○	○	◑	○	12	2	14
	Plano	◐	◐	○	◐	◑	68	1	69
Round Rock	○	○	○	◑	○	12	0	12	
San Antonio	◑	●	◑	●	●	83	17	100	
Waco	○	◐	◑	○	◐	20	2	22	
UTAH	Logan	◑	◑	○	◑	○	46	0	46
	Ogden City	◑	◑	◑	◑	◑	54	2	56
	Orem	◑	○	○	○	○	20	0	20

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UTAH	Park City	●	●	○	○	●	35	0	35
	Provo	●	●	○	●	●	50	0	50
	Salt Lake City	●	●	●	●	●	64	2	66
	West Jordan	●	○	○	●	●	34	0	34
	West Valley City	●	●	○	●	○	46	0	46
VERMONT	Barre	●	○	○	●	○	40	4	44
	Brattleboro	●	●	○	●	○	54	4	58
	Burlington	●	●	●	●	●	91	7	98
	Castleton	●	○	○	●	○	40	4	44
	Essex	●	●	○	●	○	54	4	58
	Montpelier	●	●	○	○	●	46	6	52
	Rutland	●	●	○	●	●	55	4	59
	South Burlington	●	●	○	●	●	55	4	59
Winooski	●	●	○	●	○	56	4	60	
VIRGINIA	Alexandria	●	●	●	●	●	82	8	90
	Arlington County	●	●	●	●	●	79	14	93
	Charlottesville	●	●	●	●	●	82	3	85
	Chesapeake	○	●	○	●	○	29	0	29
	Fairfax County	○	●	●	●	●	46	7	53
	Hampton	○	○	●	●	●	31	4	35
	Newport News	○	○	●	●	●	28	0	28
	Norfolk	○	●	●	●	●	54	6	60
	Richmond	●	●	●	●	●	94	3	97
	Roanoke	○	●	○	●	●	20	2	22
Virginia Beach	○	●	●	●	●	66	11	77	
WASHINGTON	Bellevue	●	●	●	●	●	97	7	100
	Bellingham	●	●	○	●	●	47	3	50
	Kent	●	●	●	●	●	75	5	80
	Olympia	●	●	●	●	●	96	9	100
	Pullman	●	●	●	●	○	54	2	56
	Seattle	●	●	●	●	●	96	13	100
	Spokane	●	●	●	●	●	64	3	67
	Tacoma	●	●	●	●	●	83	15	98
	Vancouver	●	●	●	●	●	56	9	65
	Vashon	●	●	●	●	●	81	13	94

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WEST VIRGINIA	Charles Town	●	◐	○	○	●	45	0	45
	Charleston	●	◐	●	●	◐	87	4	91
	Huntington	●	◐	●	●	●	98	6	100
	Lewisburg	●	○	◐	○	●	43	0	43
	Morgantown	●	◐	◐	◐	●	71	4	75
	Parkersburg	○	○	○	◐	◐	13	0	13
	Wheeling	●	○	◐	◐	●	57	0	57
WISCONSIN	Appleton	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	70	4	74
	Green Bay	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	60	0	60
	Kenosha	◐	◐	○	○	●	37	2	39
	Madison	●	●	●	●	●	100	17	100
	Milwaukee	●	◐	●	●	●	98	4	100
	Oshkosh	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	52	0	52
	Racine	●	◐	●	◐	●	80	6	86
WYOMING	Casper	○	◐	○	○	◐	11	0	11
	Cheyenne	○	◐	○	○	◐	16	0	16
	Gillette	○	◐	○	◐	◐	22	0	22
	Jackson	●	◐	○	○	●	52	0	52
	Laramie	●	◐	○	◐	◐	63	0	63
	Rock Springs	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Sheridan	○	○	○	◐	○	12	0	12

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SELF-SUBMIT

Cities Not Rated by the MEI Submit Themselves

Currently, the MEI rates 506 cities from all across the country. In 2012, this project began with just 137 municipalities. Though the MEI's reach is far and wide, our general selection criteria may not capture some cities that wish to be rated.

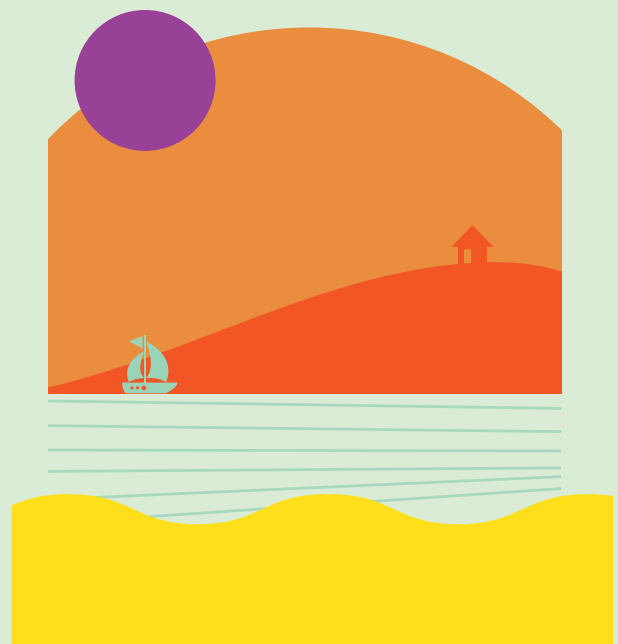
This is why we created a self-submit process to allow cities that do not fall under our selection criteria to receive a rating. City leadership who wish to have their city's laws and policies assessed according to MEI standards can send an email to the MEI team at mei@hrc.org with all of the relevant documentation needed to justify credit for each criterion.

In 2019, we had four cities successfully self-submit: Miami Beach, Florida; Doraville, Georgia; Woodbury, New Jersey; and Port Townsend, Washington. By self-submitting,

these cities have demonstrated their commitment to equality and are sending a message to their LGBTQ citizens that they are a welcome and important part of the community.

We might not be able to include scores from cities that self-submit in the publication, but we will always provide cities with their own scorecard and support them in working toward LGBTQ equality.

By self-submitting, cities demonstrate their commitment to equality and send a message to their LGBTQ citizens that they are a welcome and important part of the community.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

XAVIER PERSAD serves as Senior Legislative Counsel at the Human Rights Campaign and provides his legal research and analysis skills and policy experience to ensure that the Municipal Equality Index is incisive, accurate, and resourceful. He focuses on state and local law and policy, including protections against conversion therapy and anti-discrimination safeguards in employment, housing, and public spaces. Xavier obtained his Master of Laws degree from the London School of Economics and Political Science and his law degree from Florida A&M University College of Law. He is a member of the Florida bar.

ABOUT THE MEI TEAM

This project would not exist without the dedication, persistence, and ingenuity of the MEI team and those who have supported us. To reach the MEI team with questions, comments, suggestions, or requests for MEI hard copies or other resources, please email mei@hrc.org.

COLIN KUTNEY is one of HRC's two-person core MEI team in the role of Senior Manager for State and Municipal Programs at the Human Rights Campaign. He expertly manages both the Municipal Equality Index and the State Equality Index each year. Colin conducts municipal research, manages all project logistics, analyzes and synthesizes MEI data, and works individually with cities across the country to advance LGBTQ equality. He carries the weight of this extensive

project with incredible strength and a contagious optimism. Colin is a graduate of the University at Albany in Albany, NY.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The MEI is an unmatched assessment of municipal equality that would not see the light of day without the commitment and contributions of many individuals working together over the course of the entire year. First and foremost, HRC's Legal Director Sarah Warbelow provides the wisdom and strategic problem solving the MEI needs to be a success.

The HRC communications team of Elliott Kozuch, Lucas Acosta and Liz Halloran ensured that the launch of this valuable tool is known far and wide by delivering the inspiring story of municipal equality to every corner of the country.

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EQUALITY FEDERATION INSTITUTE

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For questions or additional information, please contact mei@hrc.org or visit hrc.org/mei.

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