

# Municipal Equality Index

A NATIONWIDE EVALUATION OF MUNICIPAL LAW

2018



# Frequently Asked Questions

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## **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](http://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

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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 February 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 five weeks.

Finally, cities were sent their final scorecards and information about the MEI 2018 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



**For the past two years, LGBTQ equality has been under attack by those at the highest levels of government. But while cynical politicians in Washington, D.C. attempt to roll back our hard-fought progress, many local leaders are championing equality in big cities and small towns from coast to coast.**

This year's Municipal Equality Index (MEI) shows in vivid detail that municipalities are making their communities more welcoming to all by protecting LGBTQ residents and visitors. Seventy-eight cities earned a perfect score this year -- the most in the MEI's history. Even in places where the path to equality can face many barriers, local leaders are making meaningful gains in the fight for fairness. Brookings, SD, Sitka, AK, Kansas City, KS, Jackson, WY and Morgantown, WV all passed comprehensive non-discrimination ordinances over the past year. And for the first time ever, a city in the Deep South, Birmingham, AL, achieved a perfect score.

As cities and towns throughout America are advancing LGBTQ rights, they are also ensuring that their employees have access to inclusive healthcare. A record-breaking 147 out of 506 cities now offer transgender-inclusive health benefits to city workers.

While we've seen incredible progress, much work remains. This year, we've adjusted and updated the MEI to help municipalities better understand the needs of our community, so that together, we can keep moving equality forward. We deducted points for non-discrimination ordinances and state laws with exemptions that target our community. We also added new criteria, including protections for youth from the dangerous, abusive practice of "conversion therapy," as well as the accessibility of single-user facilities for all genders. And because city officials must safeguard youth from the devastating harms of bullying, we have updated our criteria to recognize cities that protect LGBTQ youth from bullying in city services and facilities.

When businesses look to expand or relocate, the MEI can play an important role. CEOs know that in order to attract and retain high-performing employees, they must grow their businesses in places where LGBTQ citizens are protected from discrimination and truly welcomed by their communities. Both companies and municipalities understand that embracing equality is not only the right thing to do -- it also helps businesses and economies thrive. As such, the MEI should not only serve as a roadmap for city leaders looking to further inclusivity, but also for companies seeking to expand their footprint into places that protect their employees and customers.

HRC is proud to celebrate communities across America who are taking important stands for LGBTQ equality, and who are putting diversity and inclusion front and center in their laws and policies. This work would not be possible without our partners at the Equality Federation Institute and the statewide LGBTQ organizations and leaders who work to bring equality to the communities they call home.

With so much of our progress under attack, this is no doubt a troubling time for our community and our country. But there are also so many reasons to be hopeful, and that includes the growing number of cities and towns that are making LGBTQ equality a cornerstone of their community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chad Griffin".

**CHAD GRIFFIN**  
**President**

Human Rights Campaign Foundation

# Dear Readers

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**In this political moment, as we face unprecedented challenges to fairness, justice, and democracy at the federal level, we look to local leadership to advance equality for the LGBTQ community. Equality Federation is committed to our partnership with HRC on the Municipal Equality Index because it sets a bar that most localities want to reach. Its scores allow cities and the advocates on the ground to take stock of their progress towards legal equality for LGBTQ people, marking important steps forward as we work for lived equality for our entire community.**

There are 78 municipalities that have a perfect score this year—more than ever! In another milestone, 147 out of 506 cities offer transgender-inclusive health benefits. These achievements demonstrate how much positive work can be done locally—in the communities we call home. Equality Federation is the national strategic partner to 43 state-based equality organizations, from Equality Florida to Freedom Oklahoma to Basic Rights Oregon. They are on the ground talking to voters and lawmakers in towns big and small—and getting the work done.

Recent victories bear this out. In the fall of 2017, Equality Alabama celebrated Birmingham's passage of an inclusive nondiscrimination ordinance. PROMO Missouri recently celebrated the passage of nondiscrimination protections in St. Joseph. Equality Ohio contributed to the victory in South Euclid, Ohio, which unanimously passed a local comprehensive nondiscrimination ordinance. And Cuyahoga County, home to Cleveland and 5 other cities that have passed comprehensive nondiscrimination ordinances, is currently considering an ordinance that would offer recourse to anyone who experiences discrimination in all of its 59 municipalities.

Even when we don't achieve a win at the ballot box or city council, we continue to move the needle forward. Decades-long work at the local level to win equality has moved public support to the highest levels ever and brought forward a historic number of women and LGBTQ candidates for office this year!

We invite you to use this report to inspire and educate your communities about the progress we've made and the work ahead.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca Isaacs".

**REBECCA ISAACS**  
**Executive Director**

Equality Federation Institute

# Enduring Growth for Cities is Driven by Diversity



©Jaime Hogge

**Cities that enact LGBTQ-inclusive laws are better positioned to attract the next generation of top talent and the businesses that employ them.**

Millennials are the most diverse and educated generation of our workforce, and they value openness and connectedness at unprecedented rates. Highly-skilled workers, business leaders, and young people desire a home that embraces their whole selves and fosters opportunities to collaborate with people of varied perspectives and walks of life. Diversity and inclusion are, therefore, cornerstones for attracting and retaining residents, top talent, and industry.

The creative class is comprised of more than 40 million people—a third of the U.S. workforce—and includes scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs; researchers and academics; architects and designers; artists and entertainers; and professionals in business, media, management, healthcare and law. These individuals thrive in diverse communities, and where the creative class goes, businesses follow and economies grow.

Businesses want their workers and their families to be free from the specter of discrimination, and workers select their home based on factors beyond cost-of-living and politics. Prospective residents place a high value on a city's demonstrated commitment to equality. Enacting local laws against discrimination in employment, housing, and public spaces is the best way a city can

demonstrate its commitment to equal dignity and respect. What's more, protective laws result in a higher quality of life and foster a deeper sense of community.

Cities that do not guarantee equal rights to LGBTQ people send a strong unwelcoming message to potential visitors, residents, and investors, stymying their potential for economic advancement.

In short, many businesses and top talent consider LGBTQ discrimination a dealbreaker. Fully-inclusive laws draw in diverse residents, visitors, and enterprises, the ingredients of sustained economic growth. It pays to prioritize inclusion.

The Municipal Equality Index provides cities with guidance on how to make their communities more LGBTQ-inclusive. Each city is assessed on their non-discrimination laws, LGBTQ-inclusive employee practices, inclusiveness in city services and law enforcement, and their leadership's public commitment to equality. Taking these steps can help cities not only foster an inclusive, cohesive environment, but also create opportunities for economic investment and growth.

## **RICHARD FLORIDA**

**Director** of the Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management; **Global Research Professor** at New York University; **Senior Editor** with The Atlantic; and author of *The Rise of the Creative Class*.

# Why Cities Should Invest in Equality

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Beyond the important issues of fairness and equality lies an additional reason for cities to take matters of equality seriously: it is good business. Cities are in constant competition for residents, business, and employees, and inclusiveness is an important factor that attracts all three.

A growing body of research has shown that cities that have vibrant gay and lesbian communities have higher levels of income, life satisfaction, housing values, and emotional attachment to their community as well as higher concentrations of high-tech business.

Additionally, college-educated people's migration is strongly correlated with a city's concentration of gay and lesbian people, more so than city size, city wealth, and even the weather.

Richard Florida's fascinating work on this subject reveals a link between a city's inclusivity and its ability to attract top talent and innovative business.

The Fortune 500 has long recognized that top talent is attracted to inclusiveness. In fact, the private sector has been using fair workplaces as a tool to recruit and retain top talent for years, because fair workplaces enhance an employer's reputation, increase job satisfaction, and boost employee morale.

Cities are subject to the same incentives for their employees, and must compete with the private sector in offering inclusive policies and benefits for their LGBTQ employees or risk losing their best employees to more inclusive employers.

Cities would be well-advised to respond to the workplace considerations measured by the MEI, some of which are associated with minimal cost and pay dividends in productivity and retention.

The competition to attract new business will only get more fierce as the disparity between the two Americas—the one America where states offer near-legal equality for LGBTQ people and the other where even the most basic state protections don't exist—continues to grow.

Businesses will increasingly have to evaluate the legal landscape offered by a potential new location in its calculation of where to expand operations; in the America where state protections are weak, cities are under additional competitive pressure to institute municipal protections that make up for the deficiencies at the state level.

Cities are in constant competition for residents, business, and employees, and **inclusiveness is an important factor that attracts all three.**





# HOW IT WORKS

# CITIES RATED BY THE MEI

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

## 2018

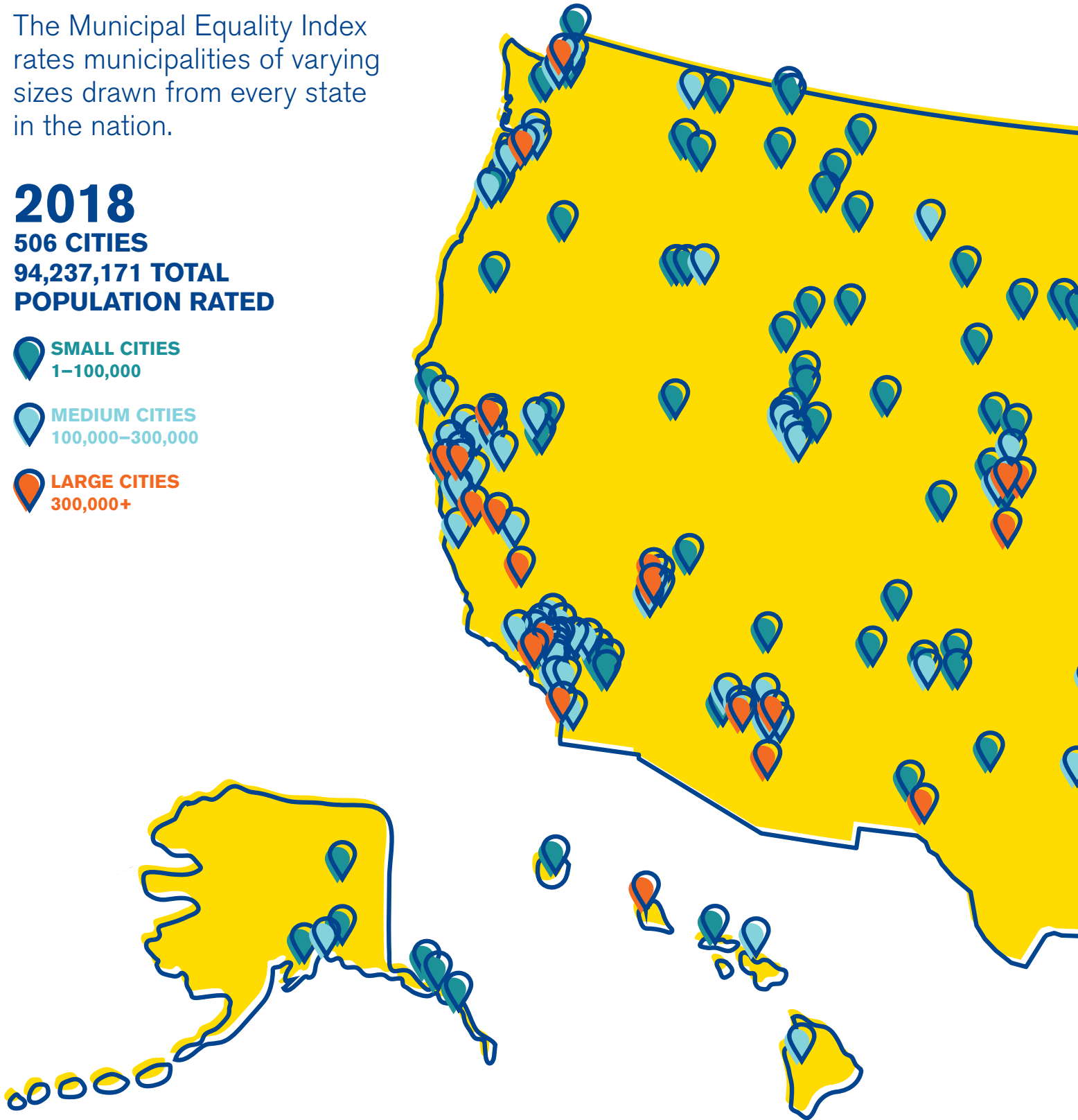
506 CITIES

94,237,171 TOTAL  
POPULATION RATED

 **SMALL CITIES**  
1–100,000

 **MEDIUM CITIES**  
100,000–300,000

 **LARGE CITIES**  
300,000+



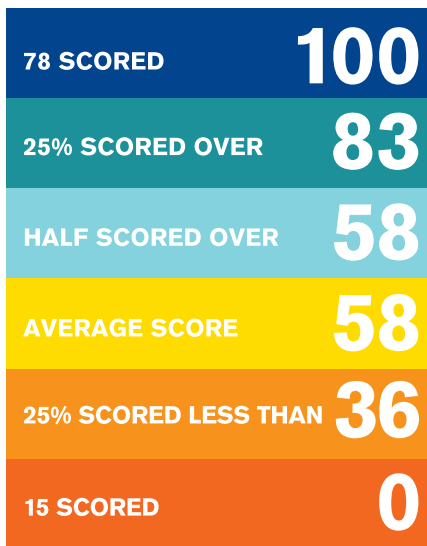




# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Cities Boldly Leading the Way to Equality

**The seventh edition of the Municipal Equality Index (MEI) lays out the most comprehensive, pioneering roadmap yet of precisely what steps cities can take to protect their LGBTQ communities.**



This year's MEI introduced brand new criteria (anti-conversion therapy protections, all-gender single-occupancy facilities, city services youth bullying prevention policies) and re-introduced a previously-assessed criterion (city employee domestic partner benefits). Inclusive Workplace and Non-Discrimination Ordinance Enforcement by Human Rights Commission points were moved from bonus to standard points, and the MEI deducted points for religious exemptions that single out the LGBTQ community.

Despite these most exacting standards to date, cities rose to—and in many cases, exceeded—the challenge.

### STEADY PRO-EQUALITY PROGRESS

Even though the scores of some municipalities experienced minor drops solely because of this year's substantial scorecard revisions (and not because of substantive changes in city laws or policies), the national average rose for the second year in a row from 57 points to 58 points. This is due in large part to the stark score increases of many cities around the country that made LGBTQ inclusivity one of their foremost priorities this year.

Cities like Richmond, Virginia; Columbia, Maryland; Gilbert, Arizona; and Sitka, Alaska—whose scores jumped by 52, 41, 36, and 36 points, respectively—tipped the scales by enacting non-discrimination laws for residents and city employees, extending transgender-inclusive health care benefits to municipal workers, appointing LGBTQ liaisons in the city executive's office and police department, and supporting targeted services for especially vulnerable groups within the LGBTQ community.

Tightened standards notwithstanding, 2018 brought in a record 78 100-point cities, more than seven times the number of perfect scores of the 2012 inaugural MEI. Some notable mentions among this top cohort include Birmingham, Alabama—the first city in the Deep South to reach this zenith; Brookings, South Dakota—the first locality in the state to climb to this top rank; and Ferndale, Michigan—a first-time 100-point city and the municipality with the smallest population in the Great Lakes region to obtain this accolade.

Overall, 27 state averages grew, with New Hampshire leading the pack.

The Mountain, Plains, New England, West, Great Lakes, and Mid-Atlantic regions of the country increased in average city score, while the Southeast region held a constant average of 43 and the Southwest region decreased in mean city score by one point.

The overall trajectory of increased scores and the ever-growing number of top-scoring cities show that city leaders are utilizing the laws and policies of local government to expeditiously implement protections for LGBTQ residents, visitors, and workers in all areas of life.

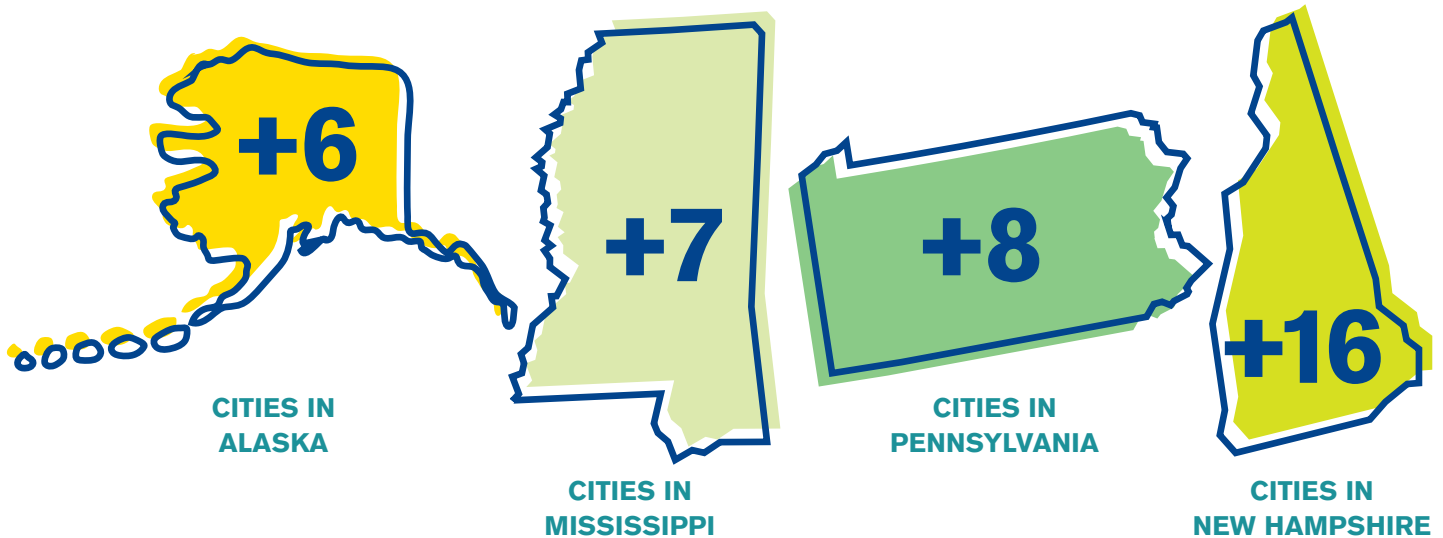
## NON-DISCRIMINATION PROTECTIONS

In the face of some state legislatures and the federal government seeking to permit discrimination against LGBTQ people, pro-equality local lawmakers continued to execute their duty of protecting the health, safety, and well-being of all citizens. Sitka, Alaska; Jackson, Wyoming; Kansas City, Kansas; Morgantown, West Virginia; and Brookings, South Dakota enacted fully-inclusive comprehensive non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ residents and visitors in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

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

- 56 cities expanded their equal employment opportunity policies to expressly include sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and 20 extended the same employment non-discrimination requirements to businesses with whom they contract for goods or services.
- 147 cities now offer transgender-inclusive health care benefits for city employees.
- 97 cities offer equal benefits to the same- or different-sex domestic partners of city employees and their legal dependents.

## Top State Average Increases Since 2017



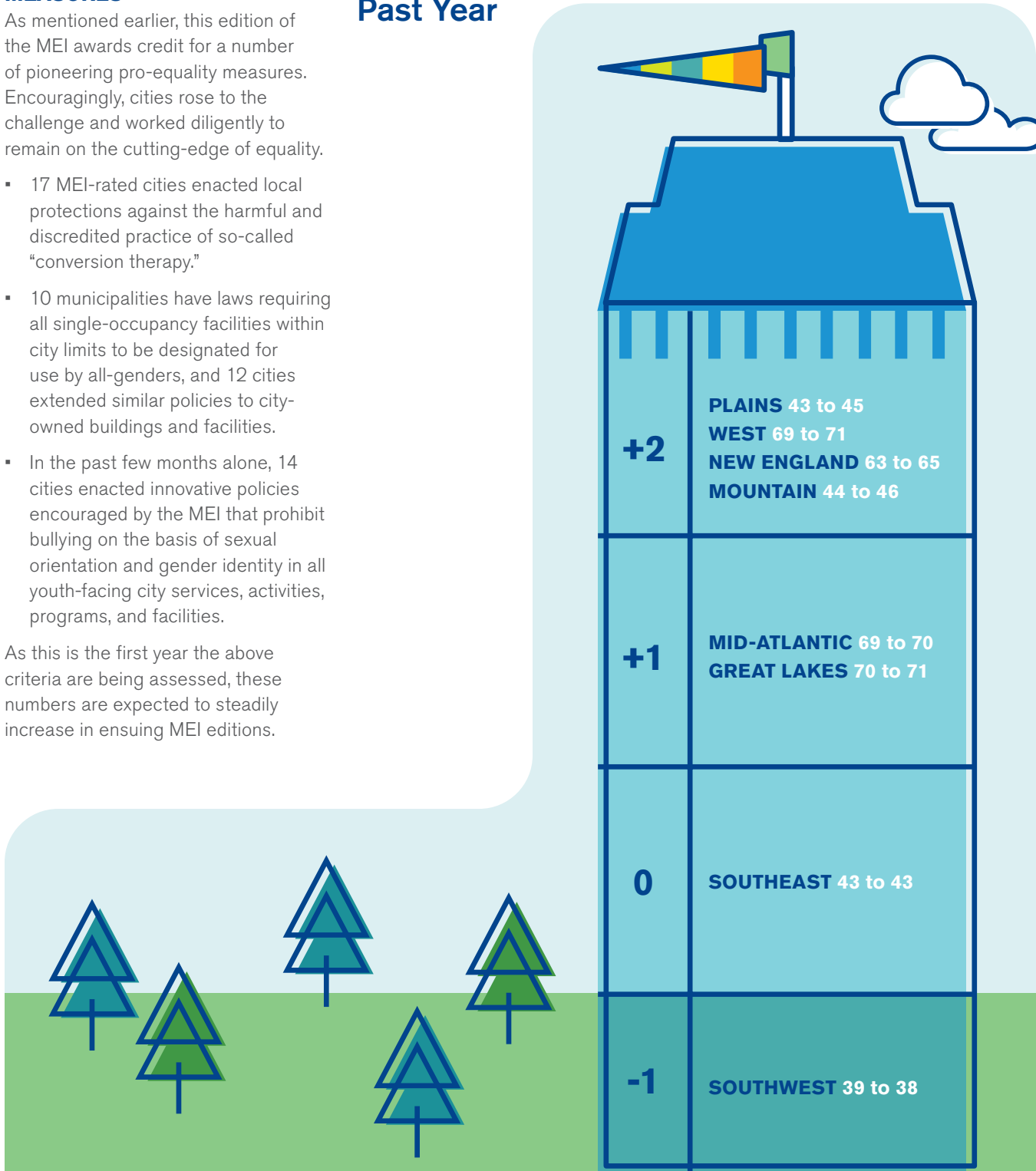
## INNOVATIVE PRO-EQUALITY MEASURES

As mentioned earlier, this edition of the MEI awards credit for a number of pioneering pro-equality measures. Encouragingly, cities rose to the challenge and worked diligently to remain on the cutting-edge of equality.

- 17 MEI-rated cities enacted local protections against the harmful and discredited practice of so-called “conversion therapy.”
- 10 municipalities have laws requiring all single-occupancy facilities within city limits to be designated for use by all-genders, and 12 cities extended similar policies to city-owned buildings and facilities.
- In the past few months alone, 14 cities enacted innovative policies encouraged by the MEI that prohibit bullying on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in all youth-facing city services, activities, programs, and facilities.

As this is the first year the above criteria are being assessed, these numbers are expected to steadily increase in ensuing MEI editions.

## Regional Average Changes Over the Past Year



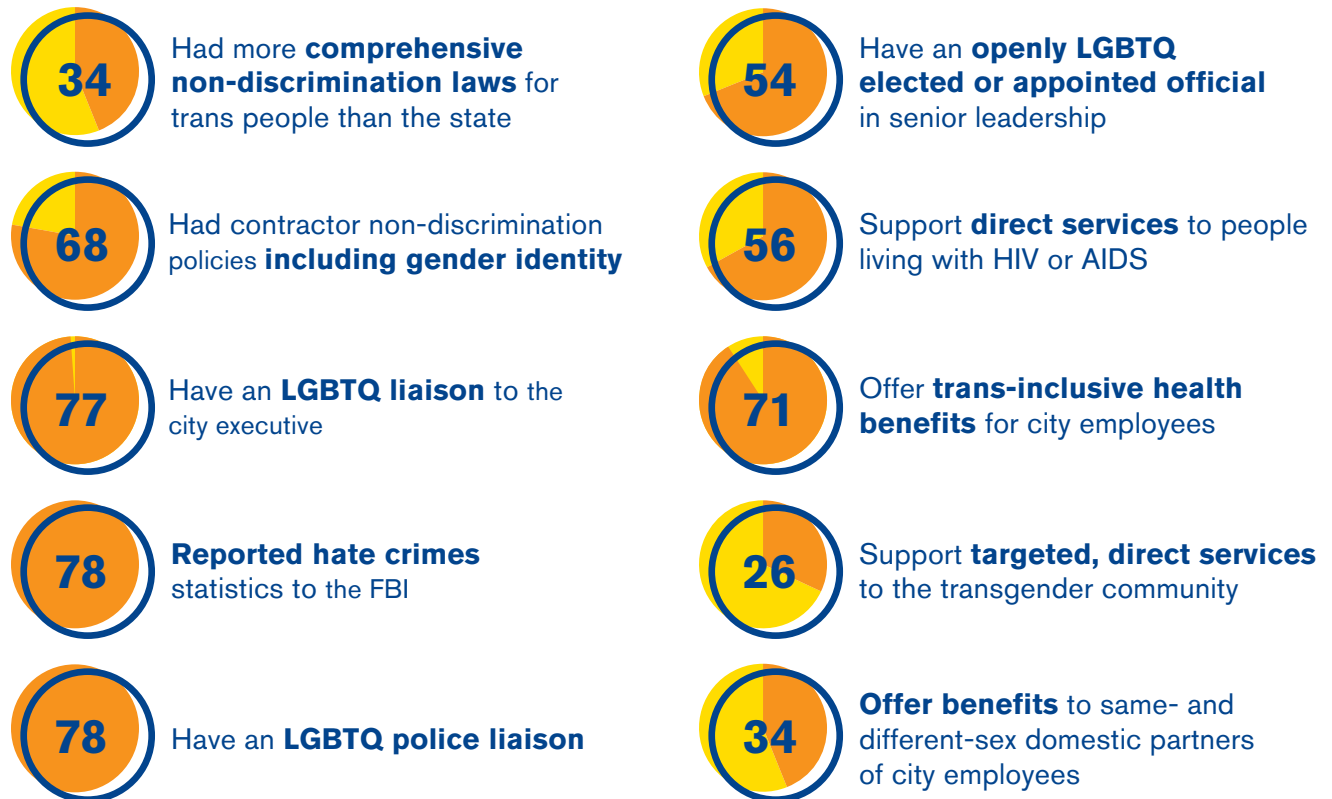
## ELEVATING RECORDS TO NEW HEIGHTS

The 2018 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 cities are not slowing down in their pursuit of inclusivity.

This year's MEI revealed:

- 78 100-point cities, up from 68 last year.
- 147 cities offering transgender-inclusive health care benefits, an increase of 36 since 2017.
- 46 "All-Star" Cities, or cities that scored above 85 points despite being in states with no state-level LGBTQ protections, compared to 41 last year.
- 162 LGBTQ liaisons in the city executive's office, and 176 LGBTQ police liaisons—up from 134 and 148 in 2017, respectively.

## Of the 78 Cities that Earned a Perfect Score...



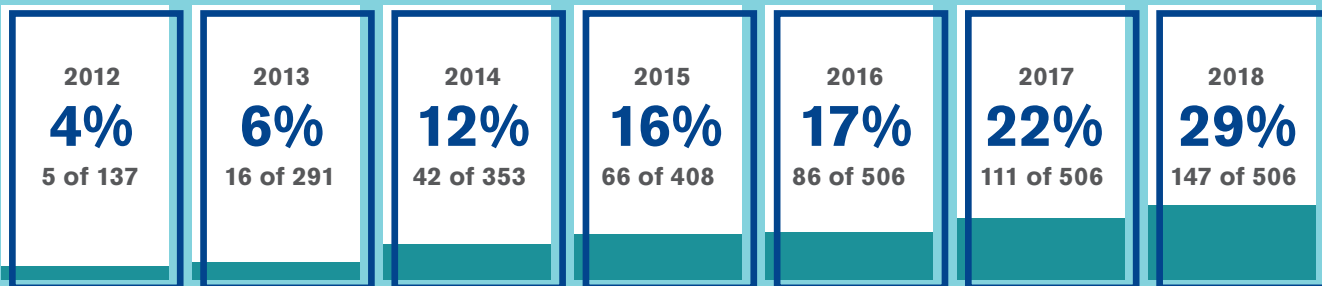
## CONCLUSION

This constantly rising bar of municipal equality is no accident. Pro-equality advocates and allied city officials work tirelessly to craft and enact policies that codify their commitment to diversity and inclusion. These officials understand the special position they occupy as the most direct representatives of their communities, best situated to utilize the relatively quick-moving gears of municipal government to fill the gaps left by the current patchwork of LGBTQ non-discrimination laws.

Moreover, local officials work to ensure that residents and visitors have access to meaningful LGBTQ-inclusive protections not only because it is the right thing to do, but because they are keenly aware that when everyone is welcomed and afforded equal dignity and respect, prospective residents and investors take notice. Communities that solidify their value for LGBTQ inclusion in enforceable anti-discrimination laws and policies are better situated to attract the nation's top talent and the businesses looking to employ them.



## Number of Rated Cities Offering Trans-Inclusive Health Benefits



# SUCCESS STORY: MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

**In June 2008, Mayor Tom Barrett underscored the necessity to re-energize the City of Milwaukee Equal Rights Commission (ERC). Since then, the ERC has remained steadfast in the charge to ensure that all people in Milwaukee are equally protected against discrimination.**



Recognizing increasing disparities in state and federal protections, the ERC worked tirelessly to rewrite its governing ordinance to extend employment, housing, and public accommodation safeguards that include gender identity, gender expression, domestic partners, HIV status, and more. In collaboration with community stakeholders, the rewrite of the city's Equal Rights Ordinance, Chapter 109, expanded the protected classes and provided remedies for victims of discrimination in the City. It unanimously passed the full Common Council in October 2017—readying the ERC to act against those who abuse the rights of others and serve as a link between the public and city government.

Through the passion, partnership, and expertise of local organizations such as the Milwaukee LGBT Center, and the acumen and drive of Alderman Cavalier Johnson, the Common Council, and the

Mayor, Milwaukee became the first Wisconsin municipality to protect minors from so-called “conversion therapy”—leading the way for other municipalities and, with hope, the State of Wisconsin to also protect youth from this harmful and discredited practice.

As an equality and equity policy influencer and defender of equal rights, the ERC will work closely with the Mayor's Office, Common Council and city departments to invest in all-gender single-stall bathrooms in all city buildings and additional resources for LGBTQ+ city employees and future recruiting. The ERC is committed to working collaboratively with community groups and individuals to advance fairness, dignity, and respect for all who live, work, and play in the City of Milwaukee.

## **THE CITY OF MILWAUKEE EQUAL RIGHTS COMMISSION**



The ERC is committed to working collaboratively with community groups and individuals **to advance fairness, dignity, and respect** for all who live, work, and play in the City of Milwaukee.



# SUCCESS STORY: BROOKINGS, SOUTH DAKOTA

**It's not often being in first place is a disappointment. However, when Brookings first appeared on the MEI scorecard in 2013, we truly were disappointed. We had the highest score of any city in South Dakota, but that was an embarrassingly low score of 34. The Brookings Human Rights Committee felt strongly that this score did not reflect the values of our community, nor did it send the right message to those considering Brookings as a place to live, work, and play. So, we set out to improve both our score and our message.**



Over the next four years, we made steady improvements. The city took the lead in the state being first to create LGBTQ law enforcement liaisons, city administration liaisons, and to offer transgender healthcare benefits to its employees. Our score increased each year, reaching a high of 72 in 2017. Along the way, the Human Rights Committee became the Human Rights Commission. In February 2017, the Commission presented a Resolution of Inclusivity to the City Council for consideration. The resolution passed unanimously, with specific direction from the Council that the words of the resolution were not enough and that Brookings must act to give the words meaning. "I was so proud when resolution 17-022 passed," Brookings Mayor Keith Corbett said. "However, I thought, why stop there? Brookings can do more. We need to challenge ourselves to find what more the community can do to ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and embrace the mosaic of diverse residents and visitors in Brookings."

Empowered by this direction, the Commission worked with the City Attorney to draft what would be the first comprehensive LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance in the state. The Commission presented the ordinance to the Council for consideration in September 2017. The Council passed this landmark legislation on a unanimous vote. This brave action by the Council catapulted Brookings to the first perfect 100 MEI score in South Dakota and sent a message to the world that Brookings is truly a place where you can bring your dreams.

**KEITH W. CORBETT  
MAYOR**

"I thought...We need to challenge ourselves to find what more the community can do **to ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect.**"



# CITY SELECTION

## How Cities Were Selected For Rating

**The 2018 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 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).

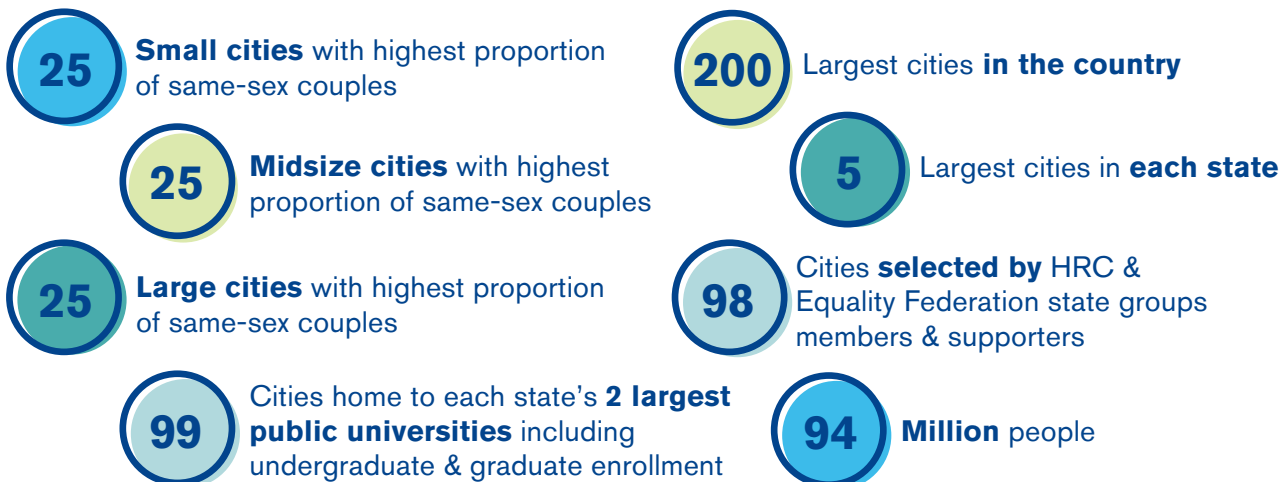
Significant overlap between these categories of cities brings the total number of cities rated in the 2018 MEI to 506. In 2012, the MEI rated 137 cities; in 2013, 291; in 2014, 353; and in 2015 we rated 408 cities.

### 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 [www.hrc.org/sei](http://www.hrc.org/sei).



# 506 TOTAL MUNICIPALITIES



# 2018 MEI SCORECARD



## CITY, STATE 1/2 2018 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				
<b>SCORE</b>	<b>0 out of 30</b>			
<b>BONUS</b> Single-Occupancy All-Gender Facilities				
<b>BONUS</b> 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			
<b>SCORE</b>	<b>0 out of 28</b>		
<b>BONUS</b> 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			
<b>SCORE</b>	<b>0 out of 12</b>		
<b>BONUS</b> Youth Bullying Prevention Policy for City Services			
<b>BONUS</b> City Provides Services to LGBTQ Youth			
<b>BONUS</b> City Provides Services to LGBTQ Homeless			
<b>BONUS</b> City Provides Services to LGBTQ Elders			
<b>BONUS</b> City Provides Services HIV/AIDS Population			
<b>BONUS</b> 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 2016 Hate Crimes Statistics to the FBI	0	0	12
<b>SCORE</b>	<b>0 out of 22</b>		

## 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
<b>SCORE</b>	<b>0 out of 8</b>		
<b>BONUS</b> Openly LGBTQ Elected or Appointed Leaders	+0	+0	+2
<b>BONUS</b> 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](http://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](mailto:mei@hrc.org).

[hrc.org/mei](http://hrc.org/mei)

# SUCCESS STORY: FAIR WISCONSIN

**In 1982, Wisconsin became the first state in the country to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation. In 2018, Wisconsin is the last remaining state that has not expanded its sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law to include gender identity.**

At the state level, bipartisan support for expanding our non-discrimination law is very slowly and incrementally growing—but in the meantime, leaders in local communities are taking matters into their own hands.



Michelle Stocker/*The Cap Times*

Fair Wisconsin is proud to help advance equality in those communities with policy and organizing support. Over the years, we have worked with local governments to pass municipal non-discrimination ordinances in the cities of Madison, Milwaukee, Appleton, Janesville, Cudahy, Sun Prairie, De Pere, and Verona, along with Milwaukee County, and Dane County.

While we continue to work at both the state and local level to pass inclusive non-discrimination laws, more municipalities are also working to protect youth from conversion therapy.


Our last state legislative session included a bill to prevent state-licensed health care professionals from engaging in conversion therapy with minors. The bill did not advance out of committee before the session ended, but the momentum it created for this important issue inspired leaders in Milwaukee to pass a local ordinance curtailing the harmful practice, making the City of Milwaukee the first municipality in the state to do so.

The City of Madison was not far behind in enacting similar protections. All across Wisconsin, we continue to see the push for equality at the local level.

We know that local leaders consider the MEI an important tool for objectively measuring their communities' commitment to fostering LGBTQ equality. The City of Milwaukee improved their score to 100 for the first time this year, and Racine has made some improvements in their score as well.

As we push for state government to recognize the need for protections for everyone in the LGBTQ community, our local government officials are leading the way for equality. Fair Wisconsin in partnership with HRC Wisconsin and our allies will continue to work side by side with local leaders to make the Badger State a safer and more welcoming place for all.

**MEGIN MCDONELL  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
FAIR WISCONSIN**



All across Wisconsin, we continue to see **the push for equality at the local level.**

# 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.

### HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONS DEVELOPMENTS

Earlier this year, the **Michigan Civil Rights Commission** and the **Pennsylvania Human Rights Commission** issued an interpretative statement and guidance, respectively, interpreting existing state civil rights protections on the basis of “sex” to include sexual orientation and gender identity. Accordingly, these enforcement bodies indicated that they are accepting complaints of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. However, because this aforementioned guidance does not have the formal binding force of law or regulation, cities in these states do not qualify for state-level credit in Part I – Non-Discrimination Laws.

# SCORING CRITERIA

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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 is 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

# 2018 SPOTLIGHT: FAIRNESS WEST VIRGINIA

**West Virginia might be considered by some to be the heart of Trump Country, but the Mountain State continues to make strides for equality one municipality at a time.**



In fact, 2016 saw more LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination ordinances passed in West Virginia than in any other state in the country. We followed up on that success with the passage of an ordinance in Morgantown, home to the state's flagship university. This means that the three largest cities in West Virginia protect their LGBTQ residents and workers from discrimination.

But we are also focusing on our small towns, which are important to sending the message to our state legislature that all West Virginians believe in fairness. In 2015, Thurmond (population 5) became the smallest town in the United States with a fully-inclusive comprehensive non-discrimination ordinance. No openly LGBTQ people currently live in Thurmond, but should one move there they will be protected in employment, housing, and public spaces!

Huntington, our second-largest city, has not rested on their laurels since passing their non-discrimination ordinance in 2013. For the second year in a row, the city is the highest-scoring municipality in the state. Mayor Steve Williams has continued to make inclusiveness a top priority in town with numerous policies undertaken to make Huntington open to all.

While this success is great, just 175,000 people currently are protected under local non-discrimination law in a state of 1.8 million. We are hopeful that the state legislature will move forward soon on adding sexual orientation and gender identity to the state's civil rights laws.

In the meantime our municipalities, both large and small, continue to lead the way.

**ANDREW SCHNEIDER  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
FAIRNESS WEST VIRGINIA**



We are also focusing on our small towns, which are important to sending the message to our state legislature that **all West Virginians believe in fairness.**

# WORKING TOWARD A FULLY-INCLUSIVE MUNICIPAL WORKPLACE

## MEI STANDARD

### Part II(D) – Inclusive Workplace

#### 2 POINTS

This section assesses whether a municipality has LGBTQ-specific programming to attract LGBTQ applicants and promote diversity in the workplace. Cities will receive credit if they have:

- An LGBTQ employee pride alliance or resource group; OR
- An LGBTQ-inclusive diversity training for all city staff; OR
- A recruitment program that actively advertises available positions to the LGBTQ community.

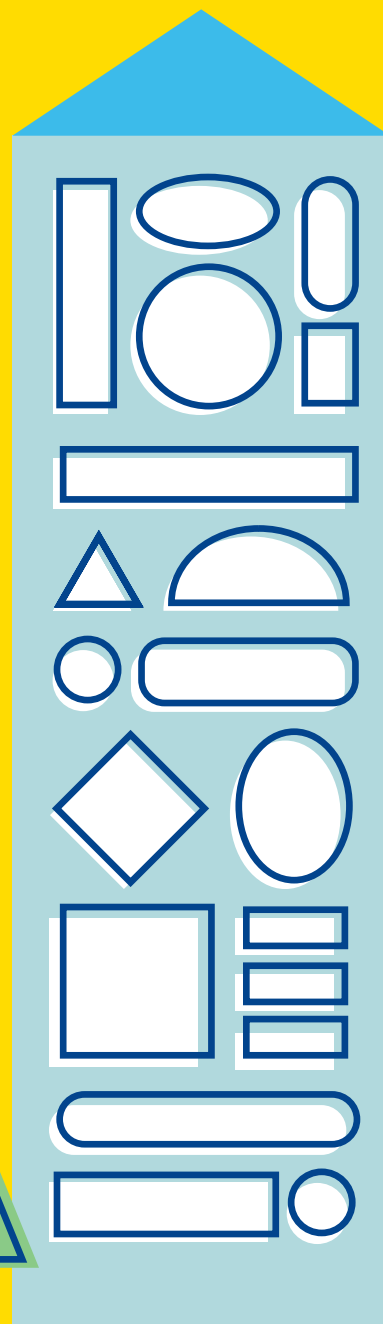
## INTRODUCTION

Promoting a diverse and inclusive municipal workplace should be a top priority of city officials. Diversity in the workplace is an important value that yields many benefits, including attracting the best applicants and increasing worker satisfaction, productivity, and retention. Governments are at their most effective when a multitude of ideas, informed by varied life experiences and backgrounds, come to the table with the same goal and mission in mind. Public servants should be reflective of the diversity that enriches the communities of those they serve. This issue brief explores specific ways that cities can attract and retain a diverse workforce—one that is representative of and embraces lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people.

## THE FOUNDATION: COMPREHENSIVE CITY EMPLOYMENT NON- DISCRIMINATION POLICIES

Robust city policies ensuring that all applicants and employees are treated fairly and equally is at the foundation of diversity and inclusion efforts. Municipalities should ensure that their equal employment opportunity policies expressly cover sexual orientation and gender identity just as they do other characteristics like race, religion, sex, and disability. These policies should extend to all employment-related actions, decisions, and benefits—starting at the application stage. Other existing policies designed to ensure a safe and respectful work environment, like anti-harassment policies, should also explicitly cover sexual orientation and gender identity alongside other protected characteristics.

Moreover, cities should implement best-practice policies for transgender employees who transition during their employment.

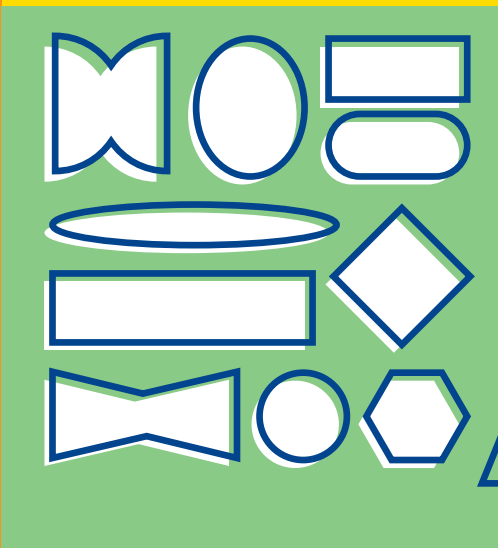




# Gender-Transition Policies

**Gender-transition policies outline the critical components to successful on-the-job transition experiences for city employees. These policies should, at a minimum:**

- Specify the people or roles charged with helping a transitioning employee manage their workplace transition;
- Outline what a transitioning employee can expect from management;
- Communicate management's expectations for staff, transitioning employees and any existing LGBTQ employee group in facilitating a successful workplace transition;
- Outline the general procedures for implementing transition-related workplace changes, such as adjusting personnel and administrative records;
- Provide a plan for how a communication strategy for co-workers and clients will be developed;
- Include educational material regarding transgender people, including a glossary of relevant terms; and
- Affirm an employee's right to be treated equally under the company's dress code policies as well as the employee's right to access sex-segregated facilities in accordance with their gender identity.



It is equally important that municipalities educate all personnel on these policies, including available complaint procedures, to ensure effective implementation and enforcement. City leadership must ensure that a respect for diversity and adherence to the policies that reify this value are followed and enforced equally at every tier of city employment.

### **REACHING FOR A DIVERSE APPLICANT POOL**

With fully-inclusive employment protections in place, cities should be intentional and proactive about disseminating employment opportunities beyond the usual outlets to reach traditionally underrepresented communities like the LGBTQ community. For instance, cities can spread awareness of job openings in

LGBTQ periodicals, at Pride festivals, and at events for LGBTQ communities of color and the transgender community. Cities can partner with university LGBTQ student organizations and resource centers to reach diverse soon-to-be graduates and alumni. Additionally, city officials should participate in recruiting and career events sponsored by professional associations representing diverse groups. Making specific recruitment outreach to the LGBTQ community is one way for cities to gain full credit in Part II(D) - Inclusive Workplace.

### **INCLUSIVE ALL-STAFF DIVERSITY TRAINING**

Diversity and inclusion efforts do not end with the diversification of a city's workforce. In order to retain employees and foster increased satisfaction and

productivity, cities must continually work to create a workplace culture that respects, values, and celebrates differences. This process starts immediately in the new employee onboarding process. Virtually every municipality has an established onboarding process that includes trainings on its values, policies, and procedures. Issues relating to diversity and inclusion should take a central role in this process, and particular attention must be paid to making sure new employees understand the unique issues facing LGBTQ employees and city residents. This includes cultural competency training on LGBTQ terminology, disparities, and needs. Moreover, all-staff training should thoroughly cover transgender-specific policies and issues, including employee transition policies.

## **Key Terms**

### **Sexual Orientation**

An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.

### **Gender Identity**

One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

### **Gender Expression**

External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

### **Transgender**

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

### **Gender Transition**

The process by which some people strive to more closely align their internal knowledge of gender with its outward appearance. Some people socially transition, whereby they might begin dressing, using names and pronouns and/or be socially recognized as another gender. Others undergo physical transitions in which they modify their bodies through medical interventions.



In developing all-staff LGBTQ-inclusive trainings, human resources departments can enlist the support of community LGBTQ organizations, the LGBTQ liaison to the city executive, or the city LGBTQ employee resource group (discussed below). To maximize effectiveness, these trainings should be conducted at regular intervals and at least annually. This sends a clear message to employees that the city welcomes and values them for who they are, increasing worker satisfaction and thereby retention. Offering regular workforce-wide LGBTQ-inclusive diversity trainings is another avenue for cities to gain full credit in Part II(D) of the MEI.

### **EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS**

Another way a city can demonstrate its value for workplace inclusion is by empowering employees of diverse backgrounds to come together through city-facilitated employee resource groups. These groups provide a forum for employees of similar diverse backgrounds and their allies to discuss shared concerns about workplace experiences and policies, a platform for them to elevate those concerns, and a space for these employees to facilitate each other's professional development. Employee resource groups can also plan educational, cultural, and social activities for coworkers or the community to further awareness and appreciation of the various facets of their identity that make them who they are. Creating an LGBTQ employee resource group is the third way a city can garner points in Part II(D) of the MEI.

### **CONCLUSION**

Promoting an inclusive and diverse workplace is vital to attracting and retaining the best and brightest employees. To achieve and maintain inclusive municipal workplaces, city leadership must ensure that all city employment policies relating to discrimination, professionalism, and safety expressly include LGBTQ people. Employment opportunities should be disseminated beyond the usual outlets to publications and venues targeted to LGBTQ people and other underrepresented groups. Lastly, equal care and attention should be given to building and maintaining an organizational culture that not only respects, but celebrates diverse perspectives and backgrounds. To this end, cities should conduct regular LGBTQ-inclusive all-staff diversity trainings and facilitate the development of LGBTQ employee resource groups.

### **POLICIES VS. LIVED EXPERIENCE**

While these policies and practices help foster a diverse and inclusive municipal workplace, it is important to note that the existence of policies alone does not guarantee a work experience free from discrimination. The MEI rates laws and policies and is not indicative of an individual's lived experience. For more on this, see page 46.

## II. Municipality as Employer

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**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 points are awarded if any of these exist).

### **DOMESTIC PARTNER BENEFITS FOR CITY EMPLOYEES**

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.

## III. Services and Programs

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**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 additional points.

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, and facilities 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.**

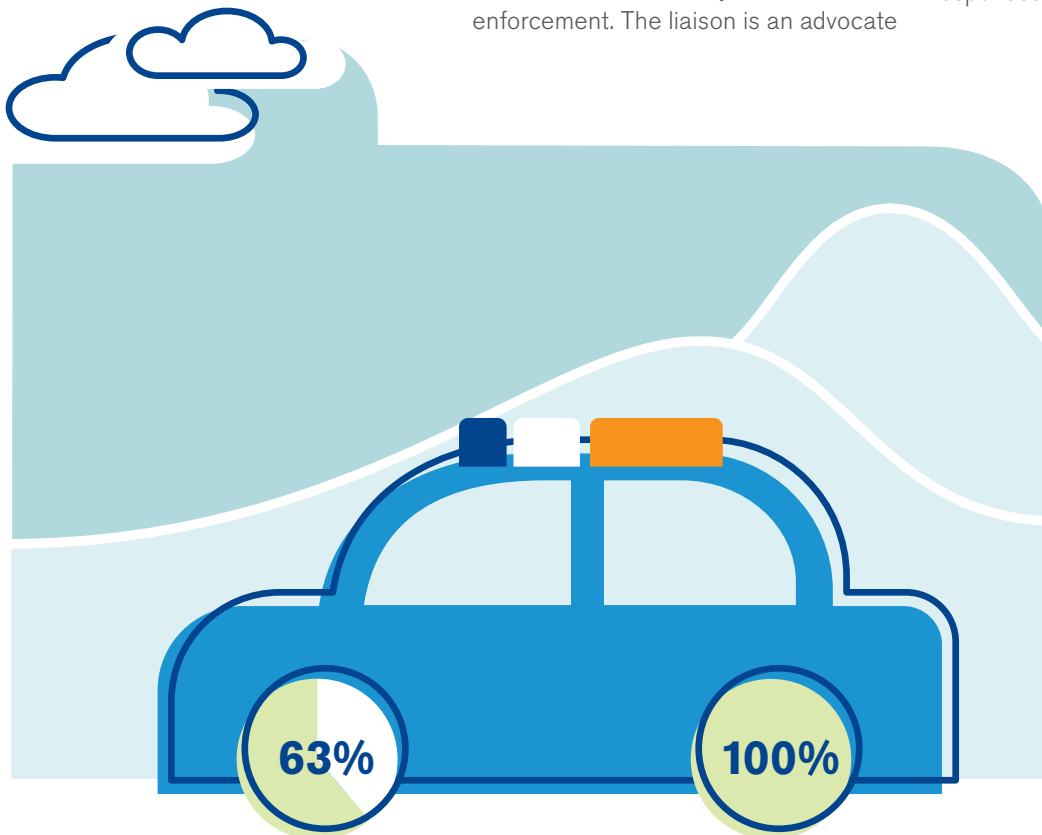
LGBTQ people are vulnerable to violence arising from bigotry and ignorance, and this danger is only exacerbated when police are perceived to be part of the problem.

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.



Of the population in MEI Cities have an LGBTQ police liaison **in their community.**

Of 100-point cities have LGBTQ police liaisons **on the force.**

## V. Relationship with the LGBTQ Community

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**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.**

# ADDRESSING THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF LGBTQ OLDER PEOPLE

In Partnership with  Advocacy & Services for LGBTQ Elders 

## MEI STANDARD

### Part III (BONUS) — City Provides Services to LGBTQ Elders

#### 2 POINTS

This section grants credit to a city for (1) directly providing services targeted to LGBTQ older people, (2) funding organizations that provide these services, or (3) providing other meaningful types of support (such as in-kind support, subsidized use of city facilities, etc.) to community organizations that provide services or resources targeted to LGBTQ older people.

**Municipalities play a critical role in delivering services to older people across the country. While some LGBTQ older people are living vibrant, full lives across the United States, many often remain invisible and may not seek services due to fear of, and experiences with, discrimination.**

Additionally, those who seek services may not be out as LGBTQ. Estimates indicate that today there are nearly 3 million people over the age of 55 who identify as LGBTQ and that number is expected to double by 2030. Additionally, research shows LGBTQ couples reside in 93% of all counties across the country. This means that in communities large and small, city

employees more than likely already serve or will soon serve LGBTQ older people.

But older LGBTQ people are resilient and—with the support of city laws, policies, and services that address their unique needs and experiences—will continue to thrive and make valuable contributions to their communities.

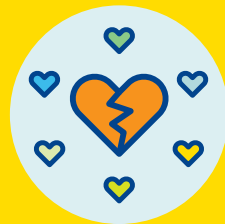
## LGBTQ older people face unique challenges as they age. They are:



2X as likely to be **single & live alone.**



Four times less likely to **have children.**



Far more likely than their non-LGBTQ peers to have faced discrimination and **social marginalization.**



More likely, therefore, to face poverty & homelessness and **have poor physical & mental health.**



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## **UNIQUE CHALLENGES**

### **Social Isolation**

Accessing safe, friendly services can be difficult for LGBTQ older people who do not live in major cities. Social connectedness keeps older people healthy and helps them live longer. LGBTQ older people, however, are twice as likely to live alone, making them vulnerable to social isolation. Older people living with HIV also face high rates of isolation, which has been shown to negatively impact health and well-being—particularly cognitive function.

### **Housing**

Older LGBTQ couples often experience discrimination when seeking rental housing and housing geared towards aging populations such as 55+ residential communities or long-term care facilities. If and when they are admitted into an older people housing development or facility, they are frequently discriminated against by property managers, staff, other residents, or service providers, making their living situation extremely difficult or even life-threatening. Moreover, these factors combined with other forms of discrimination greatly increase the risk of older LGBTQ Americans experiencing homelessness.

### **Financial Security**

LGBTQ people—particularly LGBTQ people of color and transgender individuals—suffer large economic disparities compared to non-LGBTQ individuals due to many factors, including systemic discrimination in employment, education, and other areas of life. LGBTQ older Americans are no exception. Compounded discrimination exacerbates LGBTQ older Americans' risk of financial insecurity. For instance, transgender older people are more likely to experience financial barriers than cisgender older people, regardless of age, income, and education. Studies have shown that nearly half of transgender older people live at or below two-hundred percent of the federal poverty level.

### **Health Care**

LGBTQ older people experience mental and physical illness more frequently than their non-LGBTQ counterparts, but are less likely to reach out to providers, senior centers, meal programs, and other public programs for fear of sexual orientation or gender identity-based discrimination and harassment. Moreover, older LGBTQ Americans are often subjected to culturally incompetent or even neglectful health care. They may even be denied health care altogether.

### **HIV and AIDS**

HIV and AIDS disproportionately affect the LGBTQ community in general, and the number of LGBTQ older people impacted is on the rise. People 50 and older account for 15 percent of all new HIV or AIDS diagnoses. Medical advancements in HIV treatment has allowed people living with this condition to enjoy life well into their 70s, 80s, and 90s. Today, half of all Americans living with HIV are over 50 years old.

## WHAT CAN CITIES DO?

As the LGBTQ older adult population grows, many municipalities are starting to consider their needs and incorporate their perspectives in the planning and provision of services. By making some simple changes, LGBTQ populations can be brought to the table as aging services and programs are designed, implemented, and evaluated.

### **Incorporate Targeted Resources and Programming into City Services.**

The first step a city can take to begin addressing the needs of older LGBTQ residents and visitors is reviewing the general services it already provides and assessing whether there are components of each that are specifically targeted to meet the needs of LGBTQ older adults (discussed above). If a city does not provide a vital service—like housing assistance for LGBTQ older people—and has the means to do so, it should work to create those services as expeditiously as possible. Cities that directly provide services targeted to LGBTQ older adults will receive credit in Part III (BONUS) - City Provides Services to LGBTQ Elders.

### **Support Community Organizations that Provide Targeted Services**

If a city is unable to directly provide services to older LGBTQ citizens, it should provide support to community organizations that have targeted services or resources for LGBTQ older people. City support for these organizations need not take the form of city funding or grants. Municipalities can support community organizations that offer programming or resources specifically for LGBTQ older people through in-kind support like complementary use of city facilities and donated staff time for volunteer activities. Cities that support third-party organizations that provide services targeted to LGBTQ older adults also qualify for credit in Part III (BONUS) — City Provides Services to LGBTQ Elders.

#### **RESOURCES FROM SAGE'S NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER ON LGBT AGING:**

**Strengthen Your State and Local Aging Plan: A Practical Guide for Expanding the Inclusion of LGBT Older Adults** lays out the challenges LGBTQ older people face and provides examples of how communities large and small have increased efforts to better serve this population.

**Inclusive Services for LGBT Older Adults: A Practical Guide to Creating Welcoming Agencies** outlines steps city agencies can take to make their services more inclusive of and welcoming to LGBTQ older people.

AVAILABLE AT [LGBTAGINGCENTER.ORG](http://LGBTAGINGCENTER.ORG)

### Legislative and Policy Initiatives

Municipalities should also update laws and policies to be more inclusive of their LGBTQ older adult population. Examples of specific measures cities can take to address the needs of its LGBTQ aging population are outlined below.

- Establish a Commission on LGBTQ Aging to study the issues that exist for LGBTQ older residents, make policy and legislative recommendations, and work to effectuate their implementation.
- Designate LGBTQ older people as a target population in city aging programs.
- Create an LGBTQ-inclusive local aging plans.
- Ensure that all city-owned or city-funded long-term care facilities have non-discrimination policies inclusive of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV status, and source of income alongside other protected characteristics.

- Develop a city long-term care facility LGBTQ Residents' Bill of Rights informing residents of their rights, the facility's non-discrimination policies, and its complaint process.
- Mandate LGBTQ cultural competency training for long-term care workers and aging providers of city and city-funded facilities.
- Create and implement a plan to educate all city agency staff who work with LGBTQ older adults on the unique needs and disparities of LGBTQ older people.
- Ensure that LGBTQ older people are included in local data collection efforts.

(Note: The above measures are currently not considered for credit in Part III (BONUS) - City Provides Services to LGBTQ Elders but may be considered for credit in Part V — Leadership on LGBTQ Equality.)

### CONCLUSION

As LGBTQ people age, the set of challenges they face changes and in many cases, exacerbates. Municipalities can do more to address the needs of this community in many ways that need not be cost or resource intensive. By embedding LGBTQ-aging-friendly policies in everyday municipal workings, cities begin to ensure that their aging services are reaching the most vulnerable people in their community, including LGBTQ older people. Additionally, municipalities can immediately begin to address the unique needs of LGBTQ older adults by directly providing targeted services and resources or supporting community organizations that do.

**By embedding LGBTQ-aging-friendly policies in everyday municipal workings,** cities begin to ensure that their aging services are reaching the most vulnerable people in their community, including LGBTQ older people.

# ACKNOWLEDGING CONTEXT

## Not All Cities Are Created Equal

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**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.

# 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

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**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" 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.

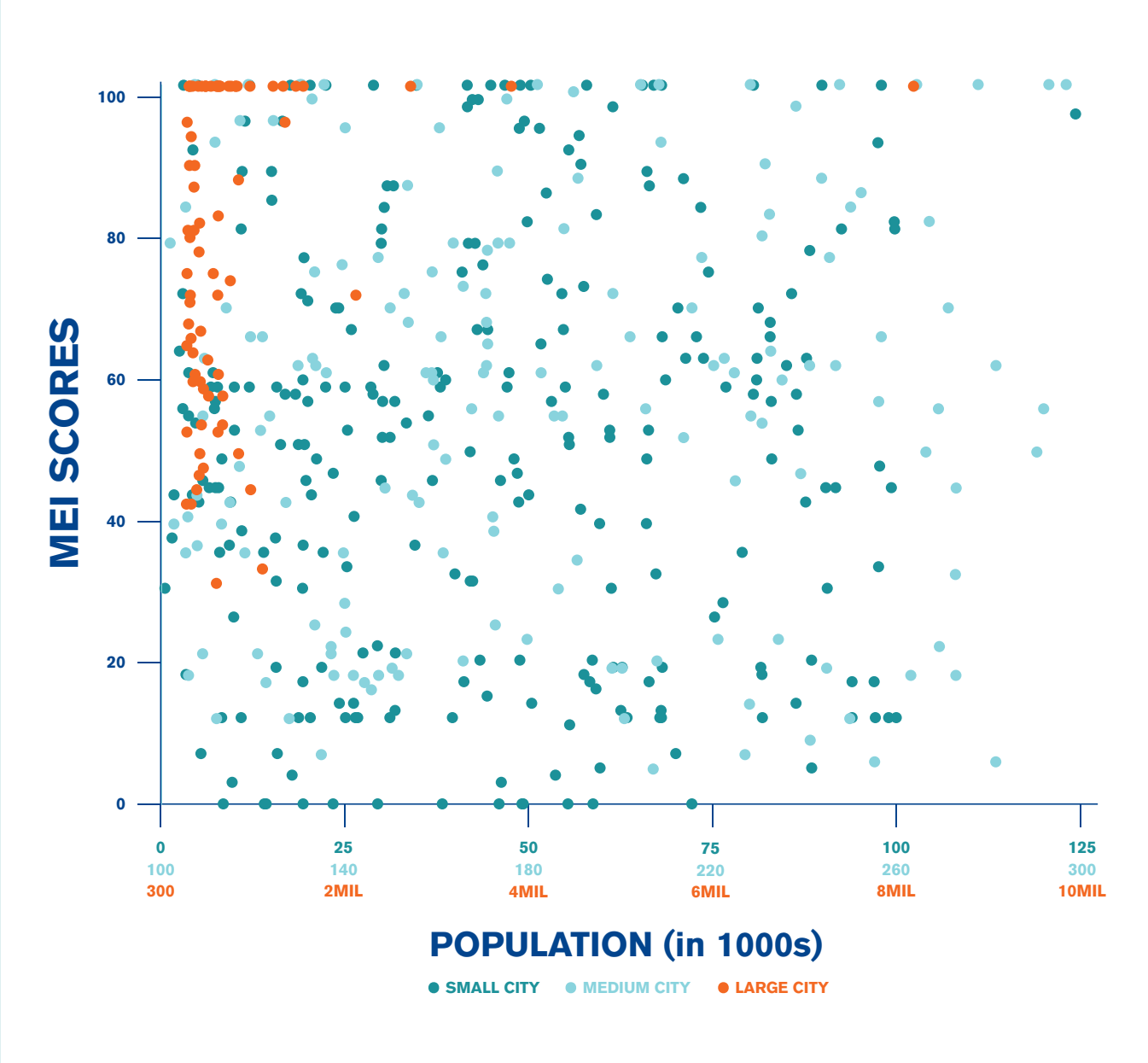
Having alternative paths to the same points and classifying some points as bonus accommodate the varying needs and capabilities of different sized cities.

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

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**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 non-discrimination 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 non-discrimination 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 dedication 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: RENO, NEVADA

**The mission of the City of Reno is creating a community that people are proud to call home. My hometown has truly undergone a RENOVation, and we continue to move in an upward direction. Staff were challenged this year to increase equity and equality in our organization, municipal code, and city policies to make services more inclusive of LGBTQ employees, citizens, and visitors.**



We wanted to ensure we were treating LGBTQ employees equally. To make the City of Reno a more inclusive workplace, LGBTQ-inclusive diversity training is required to be shared, reviewed, and tested for understanding by all of our employees. Additionally, healthcare benefits for every employee and their covered dependents is transgender-inclusive, including hormone therapy and mental health counseling.

Our next focus was encouraging our community to engage LGBTQ neighbors in a thoughtful and respectful way. LGBTQ liaisons were identified through the City Manager's Office (Mandee Bowler, Human Resources Director) and Reno Police Department (Commander Oliver Miller). These awesome employees volunteered to look at city policies and services through an LGBTQ lens, be available to constituents who want to bring LGBTQ-related issues to our organization, and encourage feedback from our LGBTQ community members in a positive way.

The Reno City Council will move forward and continue to protect and promote the personal dignity of all Reno residents, businesses, and visitors by eliminating discriminatory barriers in the community which may prevent individuals from reaching their full human potential. We look forward to making additional strides regarding social justice, diversity and inclusion, equal opportunity, and human dignity among all residents of the City of Reno.

**HILLARY L. SCHIEVE  
MAYOR**

A stylized, light blue outline map of the state of Nevada is positioned on the left side of the page, partially overlapping the text.

We look forward to making additional strides regarding **social justice, diversity and inclusion, equal opportunity, and human dignity** among all residents of the City of Reno.

# Effect of Enforcement and Lived Experience

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**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.

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.

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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.







# WHAT WE FOUND

# SUCCESS STORY: MORGANTOWN, WEST VIRGINIA

**The City of Morgantown has deliberately worked to build an inclusive city for the past decade.**

**The City realized that the West Virginia Legislature would not pass inclusive civil rights protections in the near future and decided, in 2014, to look for alternative local protections for its LGBTQ citizens. With the help of the Human Rights Campaign staff, the Morgantown Human Rights Commission and the City Attorney worked on several drafts of comprehensive amendments to the City's Human Rights Ordinance (HRO).**



In the meantime, with the support of Fairness West Virginia, several West Virginia cities successfully passed inclusive non-discrimination protections. In May 2017, the Morgantown City Council adopted official city welcome statements, which included specific mention of sexual orientation and gender identity.

On October 17, 2017, with the enthusiastic support of the LGBTQ community, leaders and members of several organizations, and the public, the Morgantown City Council voted unanimously to adopt the amendments expanding the City's HRO to include sexual orientation and gender identity. Soon after, the City Attorney, in coordination with the Morgantown Human Rights Commission, drafted a protocol for processing complaints that are not currently adjudicated by the West Virginia Human Rights Commission.

Now, Morgantown's commitment to diversity is backed by vital protections for all residents and visitors.

The Municipal Equality Index (MEI) program of the Human Rights Campaign helped engage local communities in partnerships for expanding non-discrimination beyond limitations in federal and state law. Morgantown has become a committed active partner in such change. The MEI has helped the City generate awareness of issues facing the LGBTQ community and identify opportunities for mitigation. It has also contributed to generating momentum for specific actions to further inclusivity in Morgantown. Thanks to our participation in the MEI program, the work to expand understanding and support for equality in Morgantown continues.

We appreciate the enabling work of the Human Rights Campaign in our community and in peer state communities as well.

**BILL KAWECKI  
MAYOR**

**The MEI has helped the City generate awareness** of issues facing the LGBTQ community and identify opportunities for mitigation.





# SUMMARY OF RESULTS

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**Since the 2012 inaugural MEI, the number of 100-point cities has steadily risen each year. This year's MEI solidifies that trajectory, demonstrating that cities all across the country understand their core duty to protect the health, safety, and well-being of residents by ensuring equality at home, in shared public spaces, and in the workplace. City officials understand their unique position as the closest representatives of the people, best situated to make expeditious legislative and policy changes for the betterment of everyone in their communities, including LGBTQ visitors, workers, and residents.**

While the cities rated in this seventh edition remain unchanged for the third year in a row, this year's scorecard and standards for credit underwent their most significant changes since the 2015 revisions engendered by the advent of nationwide marriage equality. This year's MEI introduced brand new criteria (anti-conversion therapy ordinances, all-gender single-occupancy facilities, city services youth bullying prevention policies) and re-introduced a previously-assessed criterion (city employee domestic partner benefits). Inclusive Workplace and Non-Discrimination Ordinance Enforcement by Human Rights Commission points were moved from bonus to standard points, and the MEI deducted points for religious exemptions that single out the LGBTQ community. These revisions combine to create the most exacting standards yet, ensuring that non-discrimination protections are the strongest they can be and encouraging cities to pursue cutting-edge ways of moving equality forward.

As a result of these changes, some city scores have decreased slightly despite having made no changes to city laws and policies. This summary of results assesses overall trends and makes direct comparisons to previous years without adjusting for minor score changes that occurred solely due to this year's scorecard revisions.

## **LANDSCAPE OF MUNICIPAL EQUALITY** **Non-Discrimination Protections**

Despite another year of state legislatures pushing anti-LGBTQ bills and a continued federal effort to rollback hard-won protections, municipalities continued to enact crucial citywide protections for workers, residents, and visitors.

Sitka, Alaska; Jackson, Wyoming; Kansas City, Kansas; Morgantown, West Virginia; and Brookings, South Dakota all enacted LGBTQ-inclusive protections covering private employment, housing, and public accommodations.

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As noted earlier, this year's scorecard recognizes cities that have gone above and beyond in their efforts to protect residents—particularly vulnerable LGBTQ youth—from the dangerous and discredited practice of so-called “conversion therapy,” or efforts to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Starting in 2015, cities have tackled this issue with increasing success and momentum. As of this report, 17 MEI-rated cities have enacted ordinances protecting against conversion therapy within city limits.

Lastly, nearly a dozen MEI-rated municipalities have enacted ordinances to ensure that single-occupancy restrooms in public spaces are available for use by all genders.

#### **Administrative Progress**

Over the past year, many cities enacted regulatory changes to meet new MEI criteria. 12 cities implemented policies requiring all single-occupancy facilities in city-owned buildings to be designated all-gender. Additionally, 14 municipalities took the innovative

step encouraged by this year's MEI of expressly barring bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and other protected classifications in all city services, programs, and facilities that serve young people.

As demonstrated in last year's report, cities continue to expand their administrative policies to protect city employees and city contractors' employees from discrimination. 56 cities revised their equal employment opportunity policies to expressly include sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and 20 extended the same employment non-discrimination requirements to businesses with whom they contract for goods or services.

This report also revealed that city officials are keenly aware of the importance of expressly covering transgender-related care in city employee benefits plans. Over the past year alone, 36 MEI-rated cities revised their city employee healthcare plans to explicitly cover transition-related health care services, ensuring

that transgender employees have equal access to medically necessary care. This brings the total number of municipalities offering transgender-inclusive health care benefits to a record 147 cities, up from 111 in 2017 and just five in 2012.

Finally, municipalities across the nation are demonstrating their respect for diverse family structures by continuing to extend equal benefits to domestic partners of employees and their legal dependents. Once used primarily to fill the void left by the inability of same-sex couples to legally marry, cities are continuing these benefits in a post-marriage equality legal landscape for all committed, unmarried couples. Assessed for the first time by the MEI since 2014, 97 MEI-rated cities currently extend the same benefits afforded to employees' spouses to employees' same- or different-sex domestic partners and their legal dependents.

This brings the **total number of municipalities offering transgender-inclusive health care benefits to a record 147** cities, up from 111 in 2017 and just five in 2012.

### LGBTQ Liaisons

Designating LGBTQ liaisons in the city executive's office and police department helps ensure that the local LGBTQ community's concerns are heard and appropriately addressed.

Almost 62 million people currently live in cities with either an LGBTQ liaison in the city executive's office or city police department, or both—the largest number since the MEI debuted. That's more than 65% of the total population of MEI-rated cities. Municipalities with LGBTQ liaisons represent cities of all sizes, regions, and political leanings. Additionally, for the second year in a row, every perfect-scoring city had LGBTQ police liaisons.

Lastly, tracking the trend of previous years, cities with LGBTQ liaisons scored better than cities without LGBTQ liaisons. Municipalities with an LGBTQ city executive liaison and cities with an LGBTQ police liaison achieved an average score nearly twice as high as their peers without those respective designated officials.

### EQUALITY ACROSS AMERICA

Cities from coast to coast—large and small, red and blue—excelled under this year's revamped scorecard.

Compared to 2017, 27 state averages increased and 4 stayed consistent.

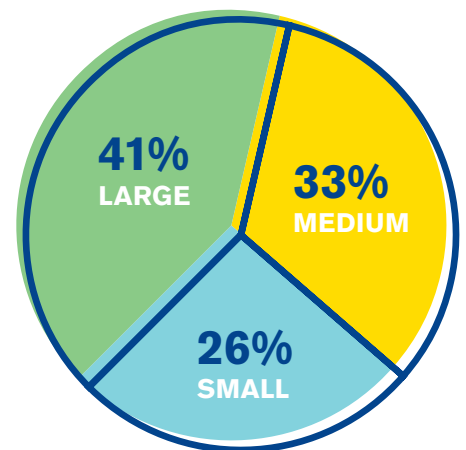
- Cities in New Hampshire increased by an average of 16 points.
- Cities in Pennsylvania increased by an average of 8 points.
- Cities in Mississippi increased by an average of 7 points.
- Cities in Alaska increased by an average of 6 points.

Unlike last year when every region of the country experienced a mean score increase, this year six regions' city score average grew (Mountain, Plains, New England, West, Great Lakes, and Mid-Atlantic) while the Southwest region's mean score decreased by one point. The Southeast region of the country held a constant average of 43. Cities in the Mountain, Plains, New England, and West regions experienced the largest average score increase, jumping two points since last year.

Also worth mentioning is the fact that both small (populations below 100,000) and medium-sized (populations between 100,000 and 300,000) cities kept pace with the gains of large cities (populations above 300,000). Each stratum increased in mean city score by one point, in line with the national average score growth.

"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 LGBTQ protections. This edition saw the number of All-Star Cities reach its highest level yet, increasing by five since 2017 for a total of 46. The number of small and medium-sized cities combined formed the majority of this group.

### All-Star City Size



See **MEI All Star Map** on Pg. 43

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78 municipalities maintained their perfect score or newly joined this esteemed cohort. This represents a remarkable sevenfold increase in 100-point cities since the first year of the MEI.

100-point municipalities come from every region of the country and span the wide spectrum of city size, demographics, and politics. This group is comprised of cities from 18 states, including localities in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, and Wisconsin. The majority of these cities (23) hail from the West. However, like last year, the highest proportion of 100s to cities rated is the Great Lakes region, with nearly 2 in 3 cities securing the MEI's highest score. What's more, small and medium-sized cities accounted for about 60% of perfect scores. Notably, this year Birmingham gained the prestige of becoming the first city in the Deep South to achieve a perfect 100-point score.

## **CONCLUSION: THE MOMENTUM CONTINUES**

The main takeaway from this year's data is this: Despite more exacting standards and new innovative criteria, localities everywhere are rising to new heights in their pursuit of equality. In the context of a patchwork of LGBTQ non-discrimination laws and a federal landscape fraught with regression on issues of equality, local legislatures across the country are courageously standing up to ensure that their friends, neighbors, and families are safeguarded from discrimination based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. Cities know that this is not only a moral imperative; pro-equality measures are economically advantageous, serving to attract the best and brightest residents and compelling businesses to follow.

Cities know that this is not only a moral imperative; **pro-equality measures are economically advantageous**, serving to attract the best and brightest residents and compelling businesses to follow.

# SUCCESS STORY: ALABAMA

**Municipal equality for LGBTQ Alabamians is the product of years' long coalition partnerships between local grassroots organizers, the Human Rights Campaign and statewide LGBTQ advocacy organization, Equality Alabama.**



**JAMIE FOSTER  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
EQUALITY ALABAMA**



**EVA KENDRICK  
ALABAMA STATE DIRECTOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN**

When the city of Birmingham, Alabama became the first in the state to pass a non-discrimination ordinance (NDO) inclusive of LGBTQ persons on September 26, 2017, it was the culmination of more than ten years of work from LGBTQ grassroots organizers and a pro-equality coalition including Equality Alabama and HRC. This year Birmingham also elected pro-equality Mayor Randall Woodfin, who appointed Josh Coleman as the state's first LGBTQ liaison in a city executive's office.

In April 2018, the city of Montevallo joined Birmingham in enacting a citywide non-discrimination ordinance providing protections that include sexual orientation and gender identity in housing, public accommodations and employment after a nearly two-years' long campaign led by local advocates of the Montevallo Acceptance Project.

As the Montevallo and Birmingham NDO victories proved, doing the right thing doesn't only take courage; it also requires action and intersectional, relational coalition partnerships.

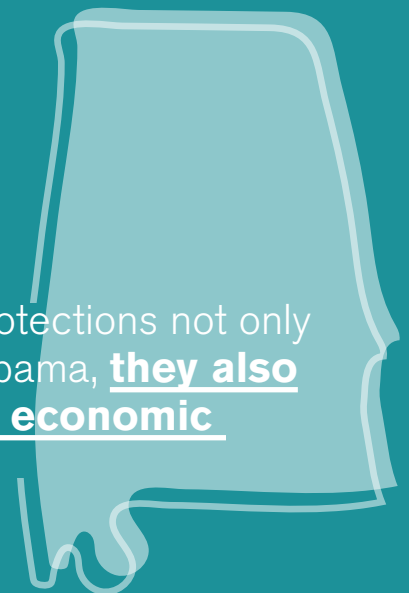
In our work to enhance municipal protections across Alabama, this commitment to community-led, directed advocacy efforts has produced a model of success we hope other organizers in deep red states will find helpful.

Our work has not stopped with Birmingham and Montevallo—these victories are only the beginning.

Alabama is currently one of 30 states without comprehensive LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination protections at the state level. This lack of statewide protections makes municipal action imperative in creating an Alabama that is fair and welcoming, and a place where families can live, work, learn, and play equally.

These municipal protections not only create a better Alabama, they also foster continued economic advancement, sending a message that these cities are open for business. When asked by reporters at the 2017 MEI release if Birmingham's non-discrimination ordinance and its high MEI score would improve the city's chances of recruiting major businesses, Mayor Woodfin replied, "Absolutely it does."

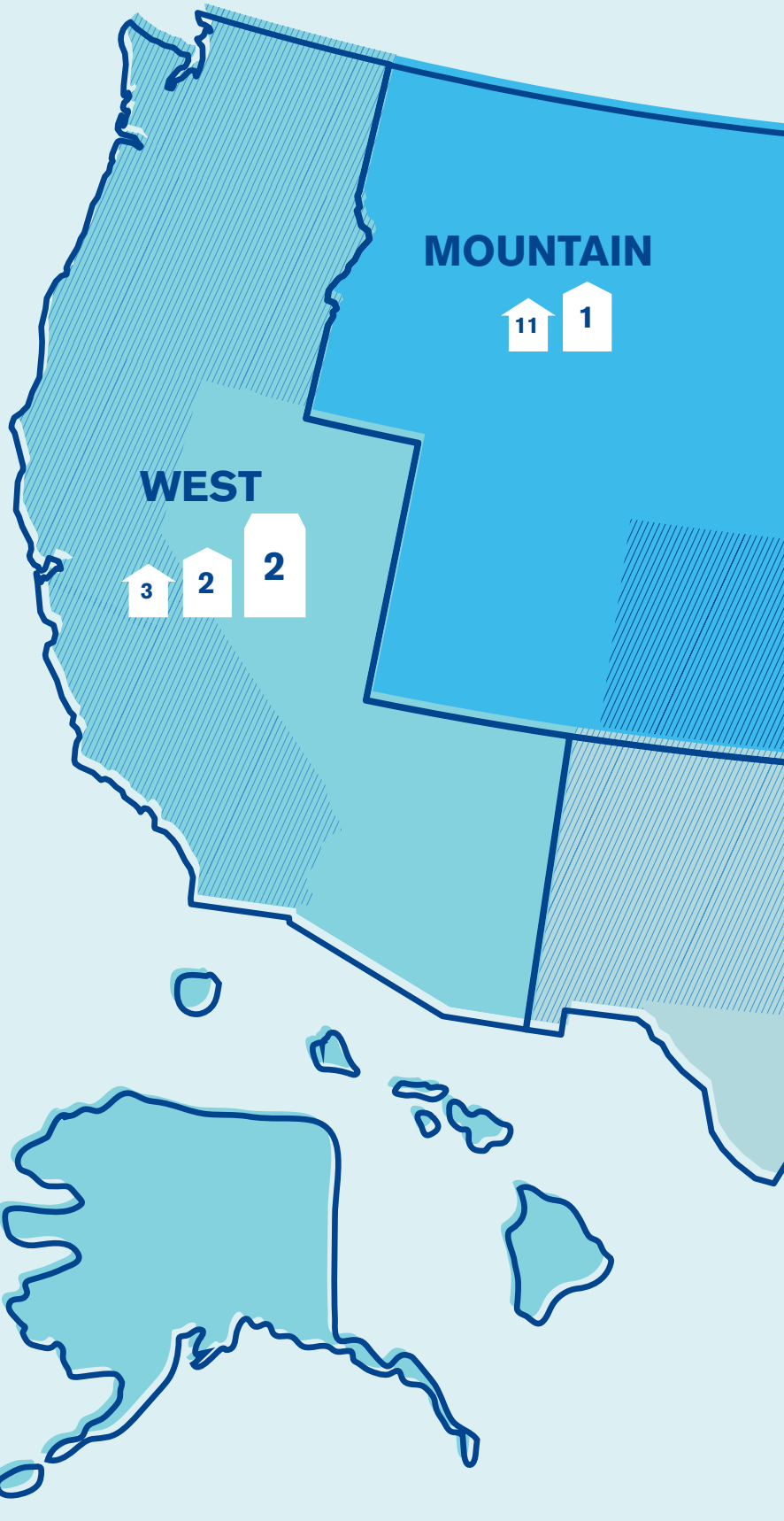
These municipal protections not only create a better Alabama, **they also foster continued economic advancement.**



# EQUALITY ACROSS AMERICA

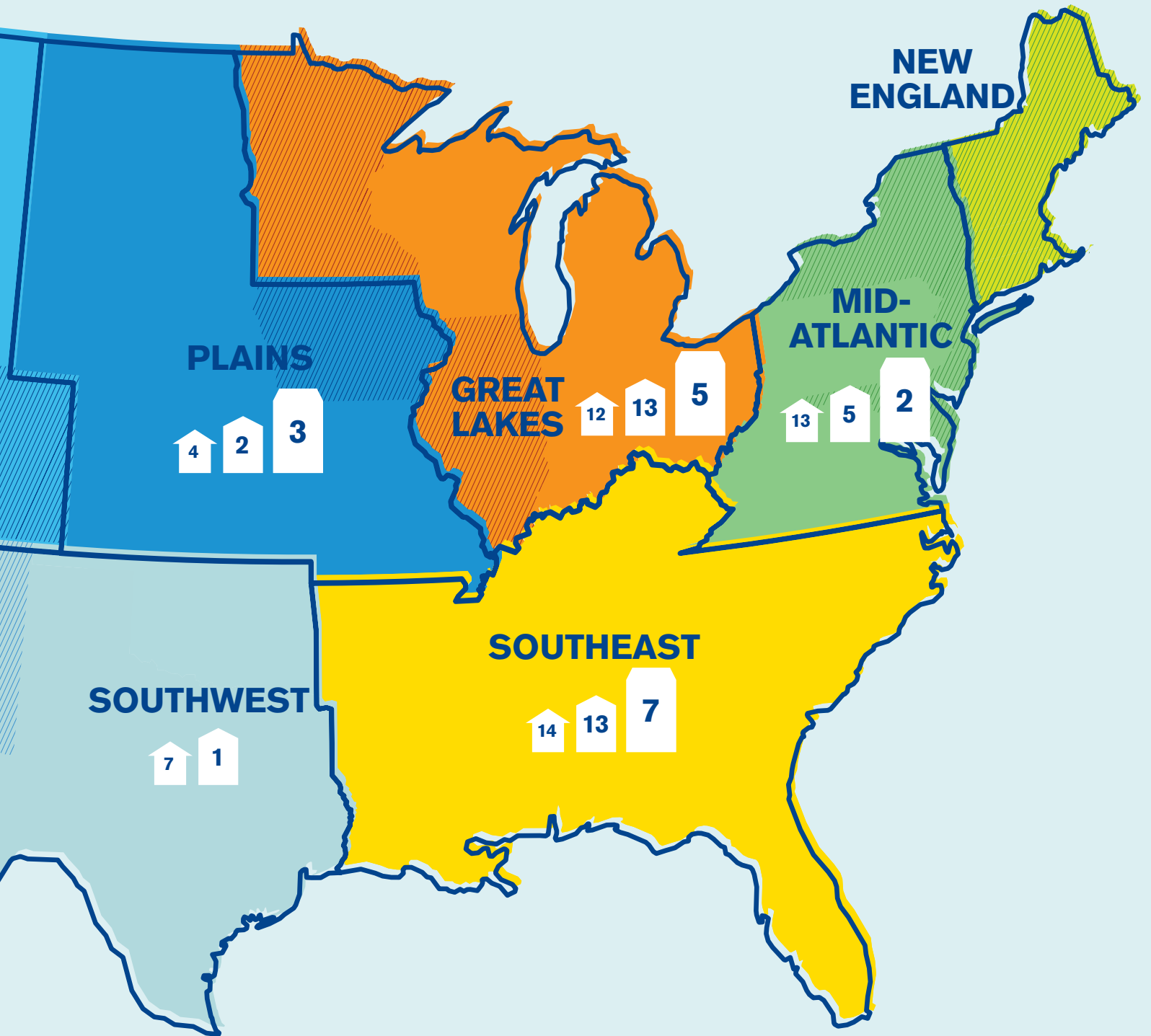
**120 MEI cities** have local LGBTQ non-discrimination protections that go beyond state law

REGION	REGIONAL AVERAGE SCORE		
	2017	2018	- DECREASE + INCREASE
WEST	69	71	+2
MOUNTAIN	44	46	+2
PLAINS	43	45	+2
SOUTHWEST	39	38	-1
GREAT LAKES	70	71	+1
SOUTHEAST	43	43	0
MID-ATLANTIC	69	70	+1
NEW ENGLAND	63	65	+2



- NUMBER OF **SMALL CITIES**
- NUMBER OF **MEDIUM CITIES**
- NUMBER OF **LARGE CITIES**

This state has comprehensive LGBTQ protections statewide and therefore was not counted in this cohort





# SCORES

Full Scorecards for each city at [hrc.org/mei](https://hrc.org/mei)

STATE	CITY	I. Non-Discrimination Laws	II. Municipality as Employer	III. Municipal Services	IV. Law Enforcement	V. Relationship with LGBTQ Community	STANDARD POINTS	BONUS POINTS	FINAL SCORE
ALABAMA	Auburn	○	◐	○	○	○	2	2	4
	Birmingham	●	◐	●	●	●	94	8	100
	Florence	○	○	○	◐	○	12	0	12
	Hoover	○	○	○	◐	○	12	0	12
	Huntsville	○	◐	◐	○	○	19	0	19
	Mobile	◐	○	◐	○	○	17	2	19
	Montgomery	○	◐	○	○	◐	15	2	17
	Tuscaloosa	○	◐	○	◐	◐	28	2	30
ALASKA	Anchorage	●	◐	●	◐	●	82	2	84
	Fairbanks	○	◐	◐	○	◐	21	0	21
	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	○	◐	●	●	◐	55	0	55
	Glendale	○	◐	◐	●	◐	60	2	62
	Mesa	○	◐	◐	●	◐	54	2	56
	Peoria	○	◐	◐	◐	○	22	1	23
	Phoenix	◐	●	●	●	●	96	8	100
	Scottsdale	○	◐	◐	●	◐	53	11	64
	Tempe	●	●	●	●	●	100	9	100
	Tucson	●	◐	●	●	●	98	10	100
ARKANSAS	Conway	○	◐	○	○	◐	16	0	16
	Eureka Springs	●	◐	◐	○	●	60	3	63
	Fayetteville	●	◐	◐	○	●	57	5	62
	Fort Smith	○	○	○	◐	○	12	2	14
	Jonesboro	○	○	○	◐	○	12	0	12
	Little Rock	○	◐	◐	◐	●	56	7	63
	North Little Rock	○	○	○	◐	◐	13	0	13
	Springdale	○	◐	○	○	○	7	0	7

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# SCORES

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STATE	CITY						STANDARD POINTS	BONUS POINTS	FINAL SCORE
		I. Non-Discrimination	II. Municipality as Employer	III. Services and Programs	IV. Law Enforcement	V. Relationship with LGBTQ Community			
CALIFORNIA	Anaheim	●	◐	◑	◑	◑	77	8	85
	Bakersfield	●	◐	◑	◑	○	54	4	58
	Berkeley	●	◐	◑	◑	●	83	13	96
	Brisbane	●	◐	○	◑	○	49	4	53
	Cathedral City	●	●	◑	◑	●	81	13	94
	Chula Vista	●	◐	◑	●	◑	88	11	99
	Concord	●	◐	◑	◑	◐	69	12	81
	Corona	●	◐	○	◑	○	48	4	52
	Elk Grove	●	◐	◑	◑	○	73	4	77
	Escondido	●	◑	○	◑	○	55	5	60
	Fontana	●	◑	○	◑	○	55	4	59
	Fremont	●	◐	●	◑	◑	80	11	91
	Fresno	●	◐	○	◑	○	50	5	55
	Fullerton	●	◐	◑	◑	○	73	4	77
	Garden Grove	●	○	◑	◑	◐	49	6	55
	Glendale	●	◑	◑	◑	◑	65	5	70
	Guerneville (Sonoma County)	●	◐	●	●	◑	88	12	100
	Hayward	●	◐	◑	◑	◑	75	4	79
	Huntington Beach	●	◐	◑	◑	○	54	7	61
	Irvine	●	◐	●	●	◐	74	9	83
	Lancaster	●	◑	◑	●	◐	73	4	77
	Long Beach	●	●	●	●	●	100	11	100
	Los Angeles	●	◐	●	●	●	98	15	100
	Modesto	●	◐	◑	◑	○	54	5	59
	Moreno Valley	●	◑	○	◑	○	56	4	60
	Oakland	●	◐	◑	●	◑	90	7	97
	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	●	◐	◑	◑	○	67	4	71
	Pasadena	●	◐	◑	◑	◑	76	9	85
Pomona	●	◐	○	◑	○	68	4	72	
Rancho Cucamonga	●	◐	○	◑	○	62	6	68	
Rancho Mirage	●	◐	◑	●	◑	87	16	100	

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CALIFORNIA	Richmond	●	◐	●	◐	◐	80	6	86
	Riverside	●	◐	◐	◐	○	61	4	65
	Sacramento	●	●	◐	●	◐	91	13	100
	Salinas	●	◐	○	◐	○	55	4	59
	San Bernardino	●	○	◐	◐	○	49	4	53
	San Diego	●	●	●	●	●	100	11	100
	San Francisco	●	●	●	●	●	100	17	100
	San Jose	●	◐	●	●	●	98	6	100
	Santa Ana	●	○	◐	◐	◐	51	4	55
	Santa Clarita	●	◐	◐	◐	○	60	4	64
	Santa Monica	●	◐	◐	●	●	96	7	100
	Santa Rosa	●	◐	◐	◐	○	67	7	74
	Signal Hill	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	79	16	95
	Stockton	●	◐	○	●	○	66	4	70
	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	4	60
	Aurora	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	62	1	63
	Boulder	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	81	11	92
	Colorado Springs	●	◐	◐	◐	○	54	0	54
	Denver	●	◐	●	●	●	98	7	100
	Fort Collins	●	◐	◐	●	◐	80	3	83
	Lakewood	●	◐	○	◐	○	56	0	56
	Littleton	●	◐	○	◐	○	49	0	49
CONNECTICUT	Bridgeport	◐	○	○	◐	◐	40	2	42
	Fairfield	◐	○	○	◐	◐	37	2	39
	Hartford	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	87	4	91
	New Britain	◐	◐	◐	●	●	77	6	83
	New Haven	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	79	4	83
	Norwalk	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	59	12	71
	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. Relationship with LGBTQ Community			
<b>CONNECTICUT</b>	Waterbury	●	◐	◑	◑	○	55	2	57
<b>DELAWARE</b>	Bethany Beach	◑	◐	○	○	○	35	2	37
	Dover	◑	◐	◑	◑	○	52	2	54
	Middletown	◑	○	○	○	○	28	2	30
	Milford	◑	◑	○	◑	◐	58	2	60
	Newark	◑	◑	○	◑	○	54	2	56
	Rehoboth Beach	◑	◑	○	◑	○	54	4	58
	Smyrna	◑	○	○	◑	○	40	3	43
	Wilmington	◑	◑	●	●	◑	80	7	87
<b>FLORIDA</b>	Cape Coral	○	◑	○	◑	◑	38	1	39
	Coral Gables	◑	◑	◑	◑	○	58	1	59
	Daytona Beach	●	○	○	○	○	30	0	30
	Fort Lauderdale	◑	◑	●	●	◑	91	7	98
	Gainesville	●	◑	◑	●	●	90	6	96
	Hialeah	◑	◐	◑	○	○	39	0	39
	Hollywood	◑	◑	◑	○	○	44	2	46
	Jacksonville	◑	◑	◑	●	◑	79	0	79
	Miami	◑	◑	◑	◑	○	52	3	55
	Miami Shores	◑	◑	●	◑	◑	80	1	81
	Oakland Park	◑	◑	●	●	●	88	9	97
	Orlando	●	◑	●	●	●	98	10	100
	Pembroke Pines	◑	◑	◑	◑	◑	68	3	71
	Port Saint Lucie	○	◑	○	◑	◑	37	2	39
	St. Petersburg	◑	◑	●	●	●	95	12	100
	Tallahassee	●	◑	◑	●	◑	90	9	99
	Tampa	●	◑	●	●	●	92	11	100
Wilton Manors	◑	◑	●	●	●	92	15	100	
<b>GEORGIA</b>	Athens	○	◑	○	◑	◐	28	0	28
	Atlanta	●	●	●	●	●	100	5	100
	Augusta-Richmond	○	◑	◑	◑	◑	33	0	33
	Avondale Estates	○	◑	○	○	◑	18	0	18
	Columbus	○	◑	◑	○	◑	34	2	36
	Decatur	○	◑	◑	◑	◑	45	0	45
	North Druid Hills	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Roswell	◐	○	○	○	○	5	0	5

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		I. Non-Discrimination Laws	II. Municipality as Employer	III. Municipal Services	IV. Law Enforcement	V. Relationship with LGBTQ Community			
GEORGIA	Sandy Springs						17	0	17
	Savannah						38	2	40
HAWAII	Hawaii County						49	2	51
	Honolulu County						46	2	48
	Kalawao County						28	2	30
	Kauai County						30	2	32
	Maui County						48	2	50
IDAHO	Boise						73	0	73
	Coeur d'Alene						66	0	66
	Idaho Falls						41	0	41
	Meridian						26	0	26
	Moscow						68	1	69
	Nampa						18	0	18
	Pocatello						71	0	71
ILLINOIS	Aurora						74	4	78
	Carbondale						38	2	40
	Champaign						72	4	76
	Chicago						93	9	100
	Joliet						71	2	73
	Naperville						61	2	63
	Peoria						62	2	64
	Rockford						57	2	59
	Springfield						63	3	66
INDIANA	Bloomington						100	4	100
	Evansville						80	2	82
	Fort Wayne						40	0	40
	Hammond						59	0	59
	Indianapolis						86	3	89
	Muncie						69	0	69
	South Bend						70	0	70
	Terre Haute						52	0	52
	West Lafayette						45	0	45

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		I. Non-Discrimination	II. Municipality as Employer	III. Services and Programs	IV. Law Enforcement	V. Relationship with LGBTQ Community			
IOWA	Ames	●	●	●	●	●	78	4	82
	Cedar Rapids	●	●	●	●	●	100	0	100
	Davenport	●	●	●	●	●	78	2	80
	Des Moines	●	●	●	●	●	93	0	93
	Dubuque	●	●	●	●	●	95	5	100
	Iowa City	●	●	●	●	●	100	9	100
	Sioux City	●	●	●	●	●	65	2	67
	Waterloo	●	●	●	●	●	59	0	59
	West Des Moines	●	●	●	●	●	90	3	93
KANSAS	Emporia	○	●	●	●	○	33	0	33
	Hutchinson	○	●	●	●	○	31	0	31
	Kansas City	●	●	●	○	●	55	0	55
	Lawrence	●	●	●	○	●	58	4	62
	Manhattan	●	●	●	●	●	71	2	73
	Olathe	○	●	●	○	●	25	3	28
	Overland Park	○	●	●	●	○	32	0	32
	Topeka	○	●	●	●	●	37	0	37
	Wichita	○	○	○	●	○	22	0	22
KENTUCKY	Berea	○	●	●	●	●	35	0	35
	Bowling Green	○	○	●	●	○	17	0	17
	Covington	●	●	●	●	●	74	0	74
	Frankfort	●	●	●	●	●	64	2	66
	Lexington	●	●	●	●	●	85	4	89
	Louisville	●	●	●	●	●	96	5	100
	Morehead	●	●	●	●	○	55	0	55
	Owensboro	○	○	●	●	●	18	0	18
LOUISIANA	Alexandria	○	●	●	●	●	44	4	48
	Baton Rouge	○	●	●	●	●	36	6	42
	Lafayette	○	●	○	○	○	14	0	14
	Lake Charles	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Metairie	○	●	○	●	●	27	2	29
	Monroe	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	New Orleans	●	●	●	●	●	91	6	97
	Shreveport	●	●	●	●	●	77	0	77

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MAINE	Auburn	●	●	○	●	●	46	0	46
	Augusta	●	●	○	●	●	46	4	50
	Bangor	●	●	○	●	●	52	1	53
	Brunswick	●	●	○	○	○	37	0	37
	Lewiston	●	●	○	●	○	45	0	45
	Orono	●	○	○	○	○	26	0	26
	Portland	●	●	○	●	●	84	2	86
	Scarborough	●	●	○	●	○	54	5	59
	South Portland	●	●	○	●	○	52	0	52
MARYLAND	Annapolis	●	●	●	●	●	55	4	59
	Baltimore	●	●	●	●	●	87	2	89
	Bowie	●	●	●	●	○	56	2	58
	College Park	●	●	●	●	●	77	9	86
	Columbia	●	●	●	●	●	94	12	100
	Frederick	●	●	●	●	●	96	4	100
	Gaithersburg	●	●	●	○	●	55	2	57
	Hagerstown	●	○	○	○	●	30	2	32
	Rockville	●	●	●	●	●	98	8	100
	Towson	●	●	●	●	○	87	4	91
MASSACHUSETTS	Amherst	●	●	●	●	○	71	5	76
	Arlington	●	●	●	●	●	92	6	98
	Boston	●	●	●	●	●	98	6	100
	Cambridge	●	●	●	●	●	100	12	100
	Lowell	●	●	○	●	○	48	0	48
	Northampton	●	●	●	●	●	94	8	100
	Provincetown	●	●	●	●	●	94	6	100
	Salem	●	●	●	●	●	100	2	100
	Springfield	●	●	○	●	○	60	0	60
	Worcester	●	●	●	●	●	97	8	100
MICHIGAN	Ann Arbor	●	●	●	●	●	100	5	100
	Detroit	●	●	●	●	○	94	9	100
	East Lansing	●	●	●	●	●	98	6	100
	Ferndale	●	●	●	●	●	91	10	100
	Grand Rapids	●	●	●	●	○	74	2	76
	Kalamazoo	●	●	●	●	○	72	2	74

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MICHIGAN	Lansing	●	◐	●	◐	◐	74	2	76
	Pleasant Ridge	●	◐	○	◐	◐	55	0	55
	Sterling Heights	◐	○	○	◐	◐	20	0	20
	Traverse City	●	◐	◐	●	◐	82	2	84
	Warren	◐	○	○	◐	○	14	0	14
MINNESOTA	Bloomington	◐	◐	◐	◐	○	48	0	48
	Duluth	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	55	2	57
	Eden Prairie	◐	◐	◐	◐	○	51	0	51
	Minneapolis	●	◐	●	●	●	98	2	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	●	◐	◐	○	●	65	0	65
	Ocean Springs	○	○	○	○	◐	4	0	4
	Oxford	○	◐	○	○	◐	17	0	17
	Southaven	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Starkville	○	◐	○	○	○	14	0	14
MISSOURI	Cape Girardeau	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Columbia	◐	◐	●	●	●	95	7	100
	Independence	○	○	◐	◐	◐	18	0	18
	Jefferson City	○	◐	◐	○	◐	20	0	20
	Kansas City	◐	◐	●	●	●	88	9	97
	Springfield	○	○	◐	◐	◐	19	0	19
	St. Charles	◐	◐	◐	◐	○	39	0	39
	St. Louis	●	◐	●	●	●	98	8	100
MONTANA	Billings	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	20	0	20
	Bozeman	●	◐	○	○	◐	57	3	60
	Butte-Silver Bow	●	◐	○	○	○	36	0	36
	Great Falls	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0

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MONTANA	Helena	●	●	○	●	●	58	0	58
	Kalispell	○	○	○	●	○	12	0	12
	Missoula	●	●	●	●	●	93	8	100
	Whitefish	●	●	○	●	●	57	1	58
NEBRASKA	Bellevue	○	●	○	○	○	14	0	14
	Fremont	○	○	○	●	○	12	0	12
	Grand Island	○	●	○	●	●	20	0	20
	Kearney	○	○	○	●	○	12	0	12
	Lincoln	○	●	●	●	●	46	2	48
	North Platte	○	○	○	●	○	12	0	12
	Omaha	●	●	●	●	●	64	0	64
NEVADA	Carson City	●	●	○	○	○	48	2	50
	Elko	●	●	○	○	○	48	2	50
	Enterprise	●	●	●	●	●	91	10	100
	Henderson	●	●	○	●	●	67	2	69
	Las Vegas	●	●	●	●	●	87	15	100
	Mesquite	●	○	○	○	●	29	2	31
	North Las Vegas	●	●	○	●	○	47	2	49
	Paradise	●	●	●	●	●	91	10	100
	Reno	●	●	●	●	●	96	6	100
Sparks	●	●	○	○	○	42	2	44	
NEW HAMPSHIRE	Concord	●	●	○	●	○	64	2	66
	Derry	●	●	○	●	○	56	2	58
	Dover	●	●	●	●	●	59	2	61
	Durham	●	●	●	●	●	84	4	88
	Keene	●	●	●	●	●	65	4	69
	Manchester	●	●	○	●	●	59	2	61
	Nashua	●	●	○	○	●	50	2	52
	Plymouth	●	○	○	●	○	42	2	44
	Portsmouth	●	●	○	○	●	44	4	48
	Rochester	●	●	○	●	○	49	2	51
NEW JERSEY	Asbury Park	●	●	●	●	●	91	4	95
	Elizabeth	●	●	●	○	○	57	2	59

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NEW JERSEY	Hoboken	●	◐	◑	●	●	91	12	100
	Jersey City	●	◐	●	●	●	98	5	100
	Lambertville	●	◐	◑	◑	●	84	7	91
	Montclair	●	◑	◑	◑	○	56	2	58
	New Brunswick	●	◑	○	◑	○	49	2	51
	Newark	●	◑	◑	◑	●	62	2	64
	Ocean Grove	●	◑	◑	◑	◑	58	2	60
	Paterson	●	◑	○	◑	◑	60	2	62
	Princeton	●	◑	◑	◑	◑	78	6	84
	Trenton	●	◑	◑	◑	○	55	6	61
NEW MEXICO	Albuquerque	◑	◑	◑	◑	◑	67	7	74
	Eldorado at Santa Fe	◑	◑	○	○	○	42	2	44
	Farmington	◑	○	◑	◑	◑	43	2	45
	Gallup	◑	◑	○	○	○	33	2	35
	Las Cruces	◑	◑	○	○	◑	44	3	47
	Rio Rancho	◑	◑	○	○	○	40	2	42
	Roswell	◑	◑	○	○	○	40	2	42
	Santa Fe	◑	◑	○	○	●	56	9	65
NEW YORK	Albany	●	◐	●	●	●	98	13	100
	Brookhaven	●	◑	◑	◑	○	57	2	59
	Buffalo	●	◐	◑	◑	●	83	4	87
	Ithaca	●	●	◑	◑	◑	82	3	85
	New York	●	◐	●	●	●	98	17	100
	Northwest Harbor	●	◑	◑	◑	○	52	2	54
	Rochester	●	◐	◑	●	●	91	9	100
	Syracuse	●	◐	◑	◑	●	75	9	84
	White Plains	●	◑	●	●	◑	85	4	89
	Yonkers	●	◐	●	●	◑	94	6	100
NORTH CAROLINA	Carrboro	○	◑	●	●	●	58	12	70
	Cary	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Chapel Hill	○	◑	◑	●	●	56	16	72
	Charlotte	○	◑	◑	●	●	57	7	64
	Durham	○	◑	●	●	◑	60	7	67
	Fayetteville	○	○	◑	◑	○	17	0	17
	Greensboro	○	◑	●	●	●	64	15	79

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# SCORES

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NORTH CAROLINA	Raleigh	○	◐	◑	◑	◑	45	7	52
	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	13	100
	Cleveland	●	◐	●	●	●	94	9	100
	Columbus	●	◐	●	●	●	98	4	100
	Dayton	●	◐	●	●	◑	97	4	100
	Dublin	○	◐	○	○	◑	31	0	31
	Lakewood	●	◐	◑	◑	●	83	2	85
	Toledo	●	◐	●	●	●	94	9	100
OKLAHOMA	Broken Arrow	○	○	○	◑	○	12	0	12
	Edmond	○	◐	○	◑	○	19	0	19
	Lawton	○	○	◑	◑	○	17	0	17
	Moore	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Norman	○	◑	◑	◑	●	41	0	41
	Oklahoma City	◐	◐	◑	◑	◑	40	0	40
	Stillwater	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Tulsa	◐	◐	●	●	●	59	6	65
OREGON	Ashland	●	◐	○	○	○	37	6	43
	Bend	●	◑	○	◑	○	56	2	58
	Corvallis	◑	◑	◑	◑	◐	62	4	66
	Eugene	◑	◑	◑	◑	◑	81	3	84
	Gresham	◑	◐	○	◑	○	66	2	68
	Hillsboro	◑	◑	○	○	○	42	2	44
	Portland	●	●	◐	●	●	98	9	100
	Salem	◑	◑	●	●	◐	84	2	86

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# SCORES

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STATE	CITY	I. Non-Discrimination	II. Municipality as Employer	III. Services and Programs	IV. Law Enforcement	V. Relationship with LGBTQ Community	STANDARD POINTS	BONUS POINTS	FINAL SCORE
PENNSYLVANIA	Allentown	●	◐	●	●	●	92	8	100
	Carlisle	●	◐	◐	◐	●	71	0	71
	Erie	◐	○	●	◐	◐	50	0	50
	Harrisburg	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	78	3	81
	New Hope	●	◐	◐	◐	●	69	2	71
	Philadelphia	●	◐	●	●	●	98	16	100
	Pittsburgh	●	◐	●	●	●	98	11	100
	Reading	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	75	2	77
	State College	●	◐	●	●	●	92	6	98
	Wilkes-Barre	●	◐	●	◐	●	74	4	78
RHODE ISLAND	Cranston	◐	◐	○	◐	◐	55	2	57
	East Providence	◐	◐	○	◐	◐	58	2	60
	Kingston	◐	◐	○	◐	○	54	2	56
	Narragansett	◐	◐	○	○	○	48	2	50
	Newport	◐	◐	○	◐	◐	55	3	58
	Pawtucket	◐	◐	○	◐	◐	60	2	62
	Providence	●	●	●	●	●	100	6	100
	Warwick	◐	◐	○	●	◐	61	4	65
SOUTH CAROLINA	Charleston	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	70	2	72
	Clemson	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Columbia	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	71	0	71
	Greenville	○	◐	◐	◐	○	20	0	20
	Mount Pleasant	○	○	○	◐	○	12	0	12
	Myrtle Beach	○	○	◐	◐	◐	21	0	21
	North Charleston	◐	○	◐	◐	◐	31	2	33
	Rock Hill	○	○	◐	◐	○	17	0	17
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	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	38	0	38
	Watertown	○	◐	○	◐	○	19	0	19

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# SCORES

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STATE	CITY	I. Non-Discrimination Laws	II. Municipality as Employer	III. Municipal Services	IV. Law Enforcement	V. Relationship with LGBTQ Community	STANDARD POINTS	BONUS POINTS	FINAL SCORE
TENNESSEE	Chattanooga	○	◐	◑	◑	●	45	0	45
	Clarksville	○	○	◑	◑	○	17	0	17
	Franklin	○	◑	○	◑	○	19	0	19
	Johnson City	○	○	○	◑	○	12	0	12
	Knoxville	○	◐	◑	●	◐	53	7	60
	Memphis	○	◑	◑	●	◑	43	3	46
	Murfreesboro	○	○	○	◑	○	12	0	12
	Nashville	○	◐	●	◑	●	57	6	63
TEXAS	Amarillo	○	○	◑	◑	○	17	0	17
	Arlington	○	◑	◑	◐	◐	44	4	48
	Austin	●	◐	●	●	●	98	8	100
	Brownsville	○	◑	○	○	◑	15	0	15
	College Station	○	○	○	◑	○	12	0	12
	Corpus Christi	○	◑	◑	●	◑	46	2	48
	Dallas	◐	●	◑	●	●	89	12	100
	Denton	○	◑	◐	●	◑	52	0	52
	El Paso	◑	◑	◑	◑	◑	46	5	51
	Fort Worth	●	◐	●	●	◐	91	9	100
	Garland	○	○	○	◑	○	12	2	14
	Grand Prairie	○	◑	○	◑	○	27	0	27
	Houston	○	◐	◑	●	●	57	13	70
	Irving	○	◑	◑	◑	◑	32	0	32
	Killeen	○	○	○	◑	○	12	0	12
	Laredo	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Lubbock	○	◑	○	◑	○	26	0	26
	McAllen	○	◑	○	◑	○	19	0	19
	McKinney	○	○	○	◑	○	12	0	12
	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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# SCORES

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UTAH	Park City	●	●	○	○	●	35	0	35
	Provo	●	●	○	●	●	48	0	48
	Salt Lake City	●	●	●	●	●	64	2	66
	West Jordan	●	○	○	●	●	34	0	34
	West Valley City	●	●	○	●	○	46	0	46
VERMONT	Barre	●	○	○	●	○	40	4	44
	Brattleboro	●	●	○	○	○	42	4	46
	Burlington	●	●	●	●	●	76	4	80
	Castleton	●	○	○	●	○	40	4	44
	Essex	●	●	○	●	○	54	4	58
	Montpelier	●	●	○	○	●	46	4	50
	Rutland	●	●	○	●	●	55	4	59
	South Burlington	●	●	○	●	●	55	4	59
Winooski	●	●	○	●	○	56	4	60	
VIRGINIA	Alexandria	●	●	●	●	●	74	8	82
	Arlington County	●	●	●	●	●	79	13	92
	Charlottesville	●	●	●	●	●	72	3	75
	Chesapeake	○	●	○	●	○	29	0	29
	Fairfax County	○	●	●	●	●	44	7	51
	Hampton	○	○	●	●	●	30	2	32
	Newport News	○	○	●	●	●	28	0	28
	Norfolk	○	●	○	●	●	41	2	43
	Richmond	●	●	●	●	●	94	0	94
	Roanoke	○	○	○	●	○	12	0	12
Virginia Beach	○	●	●	●	●	50	0	50	
WASHINGTON	Bellevue	●	●	●	●	●	97	7	100
	Bellingham	●	●	○	●	●	59	3	62
	Kent	●	●	●	●	●	75	5	80
	Olympia	●	●	●	●	●	96	7	100
	Pullman	●	●	●	●	○	54	2	56
	Seattle	●	●	●	●	●	96	9	100
	Spokane	●	●	●	●	●	64	3	67
	Tacoma	●	●	●	●	●	83	13	96
	Vancouver	●	●	●	●	●	62	9	71
	Vashon	●	●	●	●	●	75	13	88

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WEST VIRGINIA	Charles Town	●	◐	○	○	●	45	0	45
	Charleston	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	64	0	64
	Huntington	●	◐	◐	●	●	91	4	95
	Lewisburg	●	○	◐	○	●	43	0	43
	Morgantown	●	◐	◐	◐	●	76	4	80
	Parkersburg	○	○	○	◐	◐	13	0	13
	Wheeling	●	○	◐	◐	●	57	0	57
WISCONSIN	Appleton	●	◐	○	◐	◐	63	2	65
	Green Bay	◐	○	○	◐	◐	28	0	28
	Kenosha	◐	◐	○	◐	●	42	2	44
	Madison	●	◐	●	●	◐	93	8	100
	Milwaukee	●	◐	●	●	●	98	4	100
	Oshkosh	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	52	0	52
	Racine	◐	◐	◐	○	●	37	4	41
WYOMING	Casper	○	◐	○	○	◐	11	0	11
	Cheyenne	○	○	○	○	◐	5	0	5
	Gillette	○	◐	○	◐	◐	22	0	22
	Jackson	●	◐	○	○	●	52	0	52
	Laramie	●	◐	○	○	◐	51	0	51
	Rock Springs	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0
	Sheridan	○	○	○	○	○	0	0	0

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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](mailto:mei@hrc.org) with all of the relevant documentation needed to justify credit for each criterion.

In 2018, we had four cities successfully self-submit: Miami Beach, Florida; West Palm Beach, Florida; Laguna Beach, California; and Woodbury, New Jersey.

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](mailto:mei@hrc.org).

**COLLEN 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. They expertly manage both the Municipal Equality Index and the State Equality Index each year. Collen conducts municipal research, manages all project logistics, analyzes and synthesizes MEI data, and works individually with cities across the country to advance LGBTQ equality. They carry the weight of this extensive

project with incredible strength and a contagious optimism. Kutney 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 perseverance, professionalism, and innovation of many individuals working together over the course of the entire year. First and foremost, HRC's Legal Director Sarah Warbelow provides the grand vision and strategic insight the MEI needs to continue to be profoundly impactful.

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## EQUALITY FEDERATION INSTITUTE

And as always, this work happens because of our dedicated partners at the Equality Federation Institute. The achievements we celebrate in this publication are often theirs. The state groups on the following page deserve a special mention for their engagement and support this year. Lastly, the MEI Team would like to acknowledge Aná Hernandez for her partnership at the national level.

For questions or additional information, please contact [mei@hrc.org](mailto:mei@hrc.org) or visit [hrc.org/mei](http://hrc.org/mei).

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The Municipal Equality Index would not have been possible without the valuable contributions made by state and local advocates. A particular thanks therefore goes out to the following:



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