

August 25, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to you as members of the Congressional LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus in the House of Representatives. Our Caucus's mission is to promote lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) equality and to achieve the full enjoyment of human rights for LGBTQ+ people in the U.S. and abroad. We write today to urge you to make it clear that LGBTQ+ equality in Ukraine and worldwide is a priority for your administration during your upcoming meeting with President Zelensky.

We are encouraged by your administration's leadership advancing and securing the rights of LGBTQ+ people, and we were pleased to see the President's Memorandum on "Advancing the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex People Around the World." Protecting the rights of LGBTQ+ people worldwide is of utmost importance to us, and we released a [statement](#) supporting your memorandum. We urge you to consistently apply these policies making clear that LGBTQ+ rights are human rights and that any discrimination, including state-sanctioned discrimination, will not be tolerated from our allies and partners, including Ukraine.

Our Caucus has followed discussions around LGBTQ+ rights in Ukraine with great interest. Ukraine has made significant strides on human rights generally but has not been consistent on equality for LGBTQ+ people. In particular, we are alarmed at the introduction of several bills in Ukraine's parliament that would harm Ukraine's LGBTQ+ community. While these bills — which include criminalization of consensual same-sex sexual activity and punishment for homosexual or transgender "propaganda" in the style of a harmful law in place in Russia — have failed to pass, we expect that they will continue to be introduced and to be a threat to Ukraine's LGBTQ+ community.

Pride celebrations in Kyiv and elsewhere in Ukraine have been the targets of violence since Ukraine's first public Pride parade in 2013. We have advocated U.S. engagement in stemming violence targeted at pro-LGBTQ+ events and we are proud that our embassy in Kyiv has collaborated with Ukrainian officials to help address these concerns. For example, Ukrainian police have been ordered to protect LGBTQ+ groups from those who would seek to harm them.

Yet, there is ample reason to hope for a bright future for LGBTQ+ people in Ukraine. Recently, Ukraine's Cabinet of Ministers introduced legislation developed by President Volodymyr Zelensky's government to broaden Ukrainian law pertaining to hate crimes. The bill would recognize crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity, among other factors, as hate crimes. It has been included in the Ukrainian Parliament's agenda for this session, providing an opportunity to enshrine protections from hate-motivated violence for Ukraine's LGBTQ+ community in law. We urge you emphasize the importance of

this bill's passage and of ensuring that LGBTQ+ people in Ukraine can live without fear of violence or discrimination. In addition, we urge you to encourage President Zelensky to take positive steps to permit civil partnerships for same-sex couples.

President Zelensky's government also recently approved an action plan for the country's updated National Human Rights Strategy, representing additional progress in the government's plan to promote equality and human rights. The Strategy includes a focus on gender equality, and legislation to recognize hate crimes against LGBTQ+ people is understood to be a concrete action to implement the Strategy. However, we believe that additional steps are needed to ensure that the LGBTQ+ community is fully included in the Strategy.

We believe that Ukraine has made important strides in the protection and promotion of human rights, but it is imperative that we continue to work on behalf of all marginalized communities around the world, including the LGBTQ+ community. We urge you to emphasize the need to ensure equality of the LGBTQ+ people in Ukraine and to encourage that the hate crimes bill be given full consideration.

Thank you for your leadership and support for LGBTQ+ equality worldwide. We stand ready to assist you in your efforts.

Sincerely,



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

/s/
Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

/s/
Dina Titus
Member of Congress

/s/
Mark Takano
Member of Congress

/s/
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

/s/
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

/s/
Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress

/s/
Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

/s/
Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress

/s/

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

/s/

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

/s/

Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress

/s/

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

/s/

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

/s/

Mondaire Jones
Member of Congress

/s/

Eleanor Holmes-Norton
Member of Congress

/s/

Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress

/s/

Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress

/s/

Angie Craig
Member of Congress

/s/

Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

/s/

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress