

# Mike Bloomberg's LGBTQ+ Equality Policy

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Over the past two decades, the fight for equality for LGBTQ+ Americans has made incredible strides—from marriage equality to the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” to advances in the treatment and prevention of HIV. But progress has been uneven, and is threatened more than ever by the Trump administration’s efforts to systematically dismantle key protections for LGBTQ+ people. A patchwork of state laws leaves millions of LGBTQ+ people at risk for workplace, health-care and housing discrimination; there is a crisis of violence against transgender people, especially trans women of color; and the absence of U.S. leadership globally leaves more people around the world vulnerable to criminalization and violence, and threatens to undermine progress in the fight to eradicate HIV/AIDS.

**Mike Bloomberg has been a longtime supporter of, and vocal advocate for, LGBTQ+ rights.** Mike supported the right to marry as early as 2005, and was a key champion in the passage of marriage equality in New York state in 2011. As mayor, Mike launched the Commission for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Runaway and Homeless Youth, which recommended and implemented strategies to help one of the city’s most vulnerable populations. Mike also supported the Harvey Milk School, the first public high school for LGBTQ+ students, and was responsible for its expansion and renovation. Under Mike’s leadership, New York City’s public hospital system became the first public health-care system in the country to mandate comprehensive training to address LGBTQ+ health disparities.

**Mike will fight for equality for all Americans, and will restore U.S. leadership on LGBTQ+ rights at home and around the world.**

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## 1. **Ensure equal treatment of LGBTQ+ Americans in the workplace and in their communities.**

In a [majority of states](#)<sup>1</sup>, Americans can still legally be denied jobs or housing based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. [One in five LGBTQ+ people](#)<sup>2</sup> have experienced discrimination when applying for jobs and 22% have faced discrimination over pay or promotions, or when trying to rent an apartment or buy a house. The Trump administration has made every effort to set back progress made under the Obama administration. Mike believes that all Americans deserve to be treated equally, regardless of where they live or how they identify.

- **Fight for passage of the Equality Act to enshrine equal protections for LGBTQ+ Americans.** Mike was a vocal advocate for same sex marriage in New York state in 2011 and backed efforts in MD, ME, MN and WA to pass marriage equality. As president, Mike will fight to pass the Equality Act to guarantee protection for LGBTQ+ people in all facets of life—employment, housing, credit, education, public accommodations and federally funded programs—and will take executive action to ensure equal benefits and protections for LGBTQ+ federal government employees, as well as employees of firms that do business with the federal government.

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<sup>1</sup> Movement Advancement Project, [Non-Discrimination Laws](#), February 2020

<sup>2</sup> Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, [Discrimination in America](#), November 2017

- **Support the Do No Harm Act.** The freedom to practice one’s religion is one of America’s most sacred principles, but it should not be used to justify discrimination. Mike supports the Do No Harm Act, which would amend the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to clarify that it does not allow religious exemptions from generally applicable anti-discrimination laws. Mike will also end the Trump administration’s practice of granting federally funded organizations a license to discriminate against people based on their religious beliefs, sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Step up anti-discrimination enforcement.** Mike will also step up anti-discrimination enforcement by conducting affirmative, systematic civil rights testing to identify and address LGBTQ+ discrimination.
- **Create new opportunities for LGBTQ+ people to thrive and succeed economically.** Employment, health care and housing discrimination make it more difficult for LGBTQ+ people especially transgender people of color, to achieve economic security. In addition to fighting for and strengthening anti-discrimination enforcement, Mike will make education and training a national priority, protect workers’ rights, raise wages and improve job quality. Mike will invest billions of dollars in communities across the nation to help create jobs and grow incomes. He will also invest in community college partnerships and apprenticeships that connect people, including LGBTQ+ Americans, with identifiable jobs and career paths. Mike will enhance the Earned Income Tax Credit, pay it monthly and pay more where it’s most needed. Mike will also increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, ensure affordable child care and paid family leave and guarantee the right to sue employers for harassment and discrimination on the basis of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, veteran status or disability. Only half of Americans have access to public transit. Mike’s infrastructure plan will triple annual federal investment in public transit, including \$12 billion per year in a new operating assistance program that will improve service, attract new users and make it easier for all Americans to access employment opportunities. Mike will also grant all workers — including gig, contract and franchise employees — the right to organize and bargain collectively.
- **Support entrepreneurs.** To make it easier for aspiring entrepreneurs, including LGBTQ+ people, to start small businesses, Mike will set up “Business Resource Centers” across the country that will help entrepreneurs access capital, navigate bureaucracy and take advantage of federal programs.
- **Protect LGBTQ+ housing rights.** The Fair Housing Act does not protect individuals on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. As president, Mike will fight for the Equality Act, which would amend federal civil rights laws including the Fair Housing Act, to protect LGBTQ+ Americans, and will also restore and enforce the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Equal Access Rule to ensure that transgender people are able to stay in shelters that match their gender identity. Mike’s plan for affordable housing will add hundreds of thousands of new affordable housing units throughout the country, invest \$10 billion to increase affordable housing construction in neighborhoods with good schools, transportation and economic opportunities, and reform federal housing assistance to better match needs. Mike will also address homelessness by expanding permanent supportive housing, providing housing

search support and rental assistance, and expanding federal grants for homelessness prevention programs that provide legal aid and temporary financial assistance.

- **Support LGBTQ+ people living in rural areas.** Between [2.9 million and 3.8 million](#)<sup>3</sup> LGBTQ+ people live in rural areas. LGBTQ+ Americans living in rural areas are [more likely to lack explicit non-discrimination protections](#)<sup>4</sup>, and have fewer places to turn when faced with discrimination. [Thirteen states](#)<sup>5</sup> do not have an LGBTQ+ community health centers. Mike’s plan will protect all LGBTQ+ Americans, regardless of where they live, by expanding rural broadband access, investing in community and technical colleges, increasing funding for community health centers and prioritizing rollout of a public option for uninsured, low-income people living in states that have not expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. Mike will also aggressively combat the opioid and substance use disorder crisis by removing obstacles to medications for addiction treatment, expanding access to health services, and enforcing laws that require mental health coverage. A Bloomberg administration will prioritize ethical data collection and conduct a gap analysis to better understand the scope of need in rural areas and direct federal funding and resources accordingly.

## 2. **Address disparities in health-care coverage and treatment for LGBTQ+ Americans and end the HIV/AIDS epidemic.**

Today, almost [25%](#)<sup>6</sup> of LGBTQ+ people say they have avoided doctors or health care out of discrimination concerns and 31% say they don’t have a routine doctor or form of health care. [A quarter of transgender people](#)<sup>7</sup> say they’ve experienced an issue with their insurance over 12 months linked to being transgender. People with gender dysphoria are about [six times](#)<sup>8</sup> as likely to have had a mood or anxiety disorder health-care visit, or have been hospitalized following attempted suicide. Mike believes that all Americans should have access to quality, affordable health care, and he will enforce protections for LGBTQ+ people and ensure access to gender-affirming care.

- **Expand health coverage and increase protections for LGBTQ+ people, ensuring coverage of medically-necessary gender-affirming care and promoting training for health professionals.** Mike’s health coverage plan will create a Medicare-like public option, prioritizing uninsured, low-income people in states that haven’t expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. Mike will also protect and expand ACA enrollment efforts and restrict the sale of plans that don’t meet ACA standards, ensuring coverage for medically-necessary gender-affirming care (e.g., gender-affirming surgery and hormone therapy). As president, Mike will promote and fund cultural competency training for medical and mental health-care professionals to address bias, including against LGBTQ+ people, that leads to health disparities. LGBTQ+ people face discrimination and lack of cultural competence in health-care provision. Lesbians and bisexual

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<sup>3</sup> Movement Advancement Project, [Where We Call Home: LGBT People In Rural America](#), April 2019

<sup>4</sup> Movement Advancement Project, [Where We Call Home: LGBT People In Rural America](#), April 2019

<sup>5</sup> The Williams Institute, [LGBT Health Services in the United States](#), July 2017

<sup>6</sup> Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, [Discrimination in America](#), November 2017

<sup>7</sup> American Medical Association, [Health insurance coverage for gender-affirming care of transgender patients](#), 2019

<sup>8</sup> American Journal of Psychiatry, [Reduction in Mental Health Treatment Utilization Among Transgender Individuals After Gender-Affirming Surgeries](#), October 2019

women face [exclusion, inappropriate questioning and even refusal of services](#)<sup>9</sup> in health care and family planning services; transgender individuals also [face intersecting barriers](#)<sup>10</sup> related to cultural competence, health system barriers and socioeconomic barriers. Due to these challenges and other types of discrimination, LGBTQ+ people may forgo medically-necessary care altogether. Under Mike’s leadership, New York City’s public hospital system became the [first public health-care system nationally](#)<sup>11</sup> to require comprehensive training to address LGBTQ+ health disparities.

- **Protect reproductive rights.** Mike is committed to reproductive rights, and will expand access to reproductive health services by working with Congress to codify Roe v. Wade and repeal the Hyde Amendment, abolishing the Trump administration’s domestic gag rule and pledging to defend Title X family planning funding.
- **Invest in research, care and prevention to end HIV/AIDS by 2030.** There are roughly [1.1 million](#)<sup>12</sup> Americans living with HIV. Mike will invest in federal cure research and fully fund the Ryan White CARE Act, the primary source of federal funding for individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Mike will also make PrEP, which prevents HIV, available without a prescription, and will pursue every available option to make PrEP drugs affordable and accessible, including subscription models where the government pays a set amount per month to ensure access.
- **Decriminalize HIV exposure.** A majority of states still have laws that [criminalize HIV exposure](#)<sup>13</sup>. These laws do not reflect the [scientific and medical advances](#)<sup>14</sup> in understanding, preventing and treating HIV; instead, they increase stigmatization of HIV and “[discourage testing, disclosure and treatment](#)<sup>15</sup>.” As president, Mike will end HIV criminalization, reviewing federal and state laws and creating a framework to advance reform.
- **Expand sexual health education.** Since 1982, [the federal government has funneled more than \\$2 billion](#)<sup>16</sup> into abstinence-only-until-marriage programs. There is a growing STI epidemic among young people: at just a quarter of the population, adolescents now account for [half of new STIs](#)<sup>17</sup>. Mike will shift funding from abstinence-only programs to comprehensive, medically-accurate, evidence-based sexual health education, which may include abstinence as one option.

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<sup>9</sup> Nursing for Women’s Health, [The Health Care Experiences of Lesbian Women Becoming Mothers](#), October 2018

<sup>10</sup> National Center for Biotechnology Information, [Barriers to Health Care for Transgender Individuals](#), April 2017

<sup>11</sup> New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation, [HHC Will Adopt Mandatory Cultural Competence Training](#), May 2011

<sup>12</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, [Key HIV Facts](#)

<sup>13</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [HIV and STD Criminal Laws](#), 2018

<sup>14</sup> National Institutes of Health, [The science is clear: with HIV, undetectable equals untransmittable](#), January 2019

<sup>15</sup> Transgender Law Center, [HIV Criminalization Discourages HIV Testing, Disclosure and Treatment for Transgender and Third Sex Individuals](#), July 2013

<sup>16</sup> Sex Ed for Social Change, [Funding Table: History of Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Federal Programs](#), October 2018

<sup>17</sup> National Center for Biotechnology Information, [The Growing Epidemic of Sexually Transmitted Infections in Adolescents: A Neglected Population](#), February 2018

- **Ensure mental health coverage and address substance use disorder.** LGBTQ+ individuals are [more than twice as likely](#)<sup>18</sup> as non-LGBTQ+ people to have a mental health disorder, [more than twice as likely](#)<sup>19</sup> to have used illicit drugs, and more likely to have a substance use disorder. Mike’s plan will enforce laws that require insurance coverage of mental health care, and will improve screening and treatment for depression, including for adolescents. He will also provide medications to treat opioid use disorder and counseling when people enter hospitals or the criminal justice system, equip hospitals to provide medications for opioid use disorder and treat people who suffer from addiction problems instead of incarcerating them, unless they have committed violent crimes. And he will require insurers to remove obstacles (for example, prior authorization) to cover medications for opioid use disorder.

### 3. **Protect LGBTQ+ youth and families, and promote safe and inclusive schools.**

Today, [more than half](#)<sup>20</sup> of LGBTQ+ youth live in states with laws that do not have explicit safeguards based on sexual orientation or gender identity. [Nearly 9 in 10 LGBTQ+ students](#)<sup>21</sup> have been verbally harassed, and more than half have felt unsafe in school. LGBTQ+ youth are [120%](#)<sup>22</sup> more likely than their peers to be homeless, and are [almost five times](#)<sup>23</sup> as likely as their peers to have attempted suicide. As mayor, Mike prioritized the safety of LGBTQ+ young people, launching a Commission for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Runaway and Homeless Youth and supporting and expanding the Harvey Milk School, the first public high school for LGBTQ+ students.

- **Launch a new federal “Respect for All” initiative to combat bullying, harassment and discrimination in public schools.** As mayor, Mike launched a [citywide “Respect for All” Initiative](#) to combat bullying in city public schools, which disproportionately affects LGBTQ+ students, by requiring New York City public schools to develop annual plans and codes of conduct for students and staff, track and monitor all bias incidents, properly investigate complaints and take additional steps to ensure that schools are safe and respectful learning environments. As president, Mike will launch a federal “Respect for All” program to promote safe and inclusive schools for all students, including LGBTQ+ students, and will fund and promote training for teachers, principals and other key staff to combat bullying, harassment and discrimination. Research has shown that [hostile school climates lead to higher rates of truancy](#)<sup>24</sup> and dropping out for LGBTQ+ youth, which can increase the risk of arrest for these students.
- **Reduce youth incarceration.** Although they are just 5 to 7% of the total youth population, LGBTQ+ youth are estimated to comprise up to [15%](#)<sup>25</sup> of youth in the criminal justice system. As president, Mike will launch a nationwide initiative to cut imprisonment of young people in half by the end of his first term and eliminate juvenile incarceration for all non-violent offenders.

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<sup>18</sup> American Psychiatric Association, [Mental Health Disparities: LGBTQ](#), 2017

<sup>19</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse, [Substance Use and SUDs in LGBTQ\\* Populations](#), September 2017

<sup>20</sup> The Williams Institute, [LGBT Youth Experiences Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying in School](#), March 2018

<sup>21</sup> The Williams Institute, [LGBT Youth Experiences Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying in School](#), March 2018

<sup>22</sup> True Colors United, [At the Intersections](#), 2019

<sup>23</sup> The Trevor Project, [Facts About Suicide](#)

<sup>24</sup> National Institute of Corrections, [Beyond Bullying](#), 2014

<sup>25</sup> The Williams Institute, [LGBT Youth Over-Represented in Juvenile Justice System](#), July 2012

- **Promote mental health screening and services, and strengthen suicide prevention efforts.** Staggeringly, more than [40% of transgender people have attempted suicide](#)<sup>26</sup>, compared to about 5% of people nationally, and LGBTQ+ youth are almost [five times as likely](#) to have attempted suicide as their peers. Mike’s health coverage plan will improve screening and treatment for depression, including for adolescents. Mike will also invest in school-based mental health providers and strengthen the National Suicide Prevention Hotline to ensure that LGBTQ+ people are connected with organizations that are best equipped to support them.
- **Protect LGBTQ+ youth by ending the harmful practice of conversion therapy.** Conversion therapy, which has been rejected by mainstream medical organizations for decades, is still legal in [31 states](#)<sup>27</sup>. As president, Mike will ban federal funding for conversion therapy and support state and federal legislation to end the practice and protect youth from conversion therapy.
- **Address youth homelessness.** LGBTQ+ youth are [120%](#) more likely than their peers to be homeless. As mayor, Mike launched the Commission for LGBTQ+ Runaway and Homeless Youth and enacted policies to support vulnerable young people, including a family-based intervention to support at-risk LGBTQ youth. Mike will expand permanent supportive housing, provide housing search support and rental assistance and increase federal grants for homelessness prevention programs that provide legal aid and temporary financial assistance. Mike will also increase funding for emergency shelters and services for homeless and runaway youth and support programs that are designed to promote family acceptance.
- **Ensure equal treatment for families and LGBTQ+ seniors.** Across the country, there are more than 100,000 youth legally free for adoption, yet many taxpayer-funded child welfare agencies bar LGBTQ+ families from adoption. Mike will fight to pass the Every Child Deserves a Family Act to end discrimination against youth in care, as well as end discrimination in adoption on the basis of sex, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status. Mike will ensure equal benefits for LGBTQ+ families, promote affordable child care, paid family leave and the right to sue employers for harassment and discrimination related to characteristics such as race, gender, sexual orientation, veteran status or disability. More than [50% of older LGBTQ+ adults](#)<sup>28</sup> live alone and more than 30% are socially isolated. They also face higher risks for chronic medical conditions and are more likely to face [discrimination](#)<sup>29</sup> for long-term care. Mike will support LGBTQ+ seniors and end discrimination in federally funded long-term care facilities.

4. **Protect LGBTQ+ Americans, especially transgender women of color, from harm in the criminal justice system and in their communities.**

[Half](#)<sup>30</sup> of transgender people say they are uncomfortable asking police for help. An estimated [16% of transgender people](#)<sup>31</sup>, including 21% of transgender women, have been in prison during their lifetimes.

<sup>26</sup> National Center for Transgender Equality, [The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey](#), 2016

<sup>27</sup> Movement Advancement Project, [Conversion Therapy Laws](#), February 2020

<sup>28</sup> University of Washington, [Creating community, battling loneliness among LGBTQ seniors](#), June 2019

<sup>29</sup> PBS, [LGBTQ seniors face discrimination in long-term care](#), October 2016

<sup>30</sup> National Center for Transgender Equality, [Blueprint for Equality: A Transgender Federal Agenda](#), October 2016

<sup>31</sup> National Center for Transgender Equality, [Blueprint for Equality: A Transgender Federal Agenda](#), October 2016

Almost half of all Black transgender Americans have been incarcerated. [Crimes](#) targeting the LGBTQ+ community increased by about 6%<sup>32</sup> from 2017. Transgender women of color are most at risk for violence: According to the Human Rights Campaign, [advocates reported at least 25 violent deaths](#)<sup>33</sup> of transgender or gender non-conforming people in the U.S. in 2019. The majority of these individuals were Black transgender women.

- **Establish a comprehensive approach to ending violence and bias-motivated attacks.** As president, Mike will establish a comprehensive approach to addressing violence against LGBTQ+ people, especially transgender women of color. Mike will make hate and bias crimes a top federal priority, directing the FBI to take the lead on bias crime investigations, training local authorities to identify hate and pressing states to report all hate crimes to the federal government, and improving data collection on violent deaths of LGBTQ+ people.
- **End the LGBTQ+ panic legal defense.** Mike will stop the strategy in which defendants charged with assault or murder claim they acted in a state of violent temporary insanity because of unwanted same-sex sexual advances.
- **Fund violence prevention programs.** Initiatives such as [Cure Violence](#) mobilize community members and credible messengers to de-escalate tensions and break the cycle of violence. In areas of New York that implemented Cure Violence while Mike was at City Hall, gun violence rates fell by as much as 50% in four years.
- **Support domestic violence victims.** Mike will sign a bill reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act immediately, with necessary improvements to increase funding for sexual assault prevention and housing protection for victims. He will encourage employers to help LGBTQ+ workers who have suffered domestic violence by helping to fund paid leave, relocation assistance and other services for survivors. He will also add funding to build family justice centers, which provide one-stop services for survivors of domestic violence and their children regardless of their immigration status or the language they speak—and make it easier for victims to seek justice.
- **Mandate more oversight, accountability and training for law enforcement.** Mike will require regular training for federal law enforcement in de-escalation and implicit bias to address high levels of police profiling and misconduct, including against LGBTQ+ people, and pressure states to follow suit with their own statutes and fund training nationwide. Mike will also mandate that federal officers wear body cameras and will fund cameras for state and local police. Federal agencies will employ early warning systems to identify at-risk officers and intervene with additional training and counseling before abuse occurs—and will fund these [effective](#)<sup>34</sup> programs in the states. Mike will ensure federal law enforcement have independent and transparent oversight boards to hold abusive officers accountable, and will pressure states to do the same. He will expand data on police use of force, pressing state and local agencies to report all incidents to the FBI's Use-of-Force Data Collection and publish information broadly. He will re-start

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<sup>32</sup> FBI, [2018 Hate Crime Statistics](#)

<sup>33</sup> The Human Rights Campaign, [Violence Against the Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Community in 2020](#)

<sup>34</sup> National Institute of Justice, [Early Warning Systems: Responding to the Problem Police Officer](#), July 2001

“pattern or practice” investigations to reform police agencies with an abusive history, including against LGBTQ+ people.

- **Ensure the safety of LGBTQ+ people, including transgender women of color, in the justice system.** Mike is committed to reforming America’s criminal justice system. As president, Mike will work to drastically reduce incarceration nationwide, issue an executive order ending the practice of solitary confinement for all federal prisoners other than in extreme cases and pressure states to end solitary nationwide, and launch a national effort to eliminate unsafe prison conditions. Mike will fund trauma-informed mental health care and substance abuse services for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people. He will ensure the safe housing, treatment and care of transgender people in prison, reversing the Trump administration policy that prevents transgender people in prison from being housed in the facilities that reflect their gender identity, and ensuring that programs, services and basic necessities provided are consistent with gender identity.

## 5. Lead by example, protecting the rights of LGBTQ+ people at home and abroad.

The Trump administration has stepped back from America’s leadership on LGBTQ+ issues at home and around the world, [banning](#)<sup>35</sup> transgender people from serving in our military, weakening protections for LGBTQ+ people in our refugee and asylum systems and moving away from global efforts to protect the rights of LGBTI individuals and eradicate HIV/AIDS. As president, Mike will restore U.S. leadership and fight for progress.

- **Restore White House leadership and LGBTQ+ visibility.** Mike will restore White House leadership on LGBTQ+ issues at home and abroad, appointing cabinet members and staff who represent the full diversity of the country, celebrating Pride Month and observing Transgender Day of Remembrance and International Transgender Day of Visibility.
- **Renew efforts to fight HIV/AIDS globally.** Nearly 40 million people globally have HIV/AIDS, with [1.7 million](#)<sup>36</sup> new cases in 2018. Under Mike’s leadership, the U.S. will work with the United Nations to lead the global effort to end HIV/AIDS by 2030, including an increased commitment to the president’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).
- **Protect the rights of LGBTI individuals abroad.** Mike will recommit to the Global Equality Fund, of which Bloomberg L.P. is already a partner. He will appoint a Special Envoy on LGBTI issues at the State Department, combat LGBTI criminalization by foreign governments and require progress reports from all agencies engaged abroad. He will also recognize same-sex relationships from countries where civil marriage is not available and treat same-sex parents of children born abroad equally.
- **Honor service members and veterans.** Mike will reverse the ban on transgender individuals serving in the military and rescind the exclusion of coverage of gender-affirming care in the

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<sup>35</sup> National Center for Transgender Equality, [Trump Administration Announces Beginning of Transgender Military Ban on April 12](#), March 2019

<sup>36</sup> UNAIDS, [Global HIV & AIDS statistics](#), 2019

Veterans Health Administration. He will also review and restore honorable discharges and military benefits to veterans who were discharged solely for being LGBTQ+ prior to the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

- **Protect LGBTQ+ people in America's refugee and asylum systems.** Mike will affirm protections for LGBTQ+ people facing persecution abroad who are seeking asylum in the United States. As president, Mike will rebuild America's refugee resettlement program and will invest in community-based alternatives to immigrant detention, especially for individuals who are at risk of harm in detention and do not pose a threat to public safety.