

# SUCCESS STORY: EQUALITY OHIO

## EXPANDING EQUALITY ONE LOCALITY AT A TIME

Just a few years ago, Ohio only had a handful of cities that had fully inclusive protections in place for their LGBTQ+ residents.

“Fully inclusive” means that a local ordinance protects residents and visitors based on both sexual orientation and gender identity in the key legal areas of housing, employment, and public accommodations, and any legal exemptions are narrow and match state and federal law.

Equality Ohio began providing focused community organizing and policy support to cities in 2014 with the dynamic support of national partners like HRC. To date, we are so proud that 35 localities—34 cities and 1 county—have invested in both legal and lived equality for their communities by passing fully inclusive ordinances. The language of these local laws matter, and Ohio has some of the strongest ordinances on the books due to hours of thoughtful guidance that HRC and Equality Ohio have provided to local law directors drafting these ordinances.

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”*

— MARGARET MEAD

## DUBLIN—A COMMUNITY ORGANIZING SUCCESS STORY

The residents of Dublin—a suburb of Columbus, Ohio—illustrated Margaret Mead’s call to action powerfully by forming a local community organizing group called [Rainbow Dublin](#). After identifying the need for school officials to better support LGBTQ+ youth, and in the wake of HRC’s MEI giving Dublin a poor score of 45 for several years, community members, youth, parents, and allies of Dublin came together to make change. Part of that change included advocating for a fully inclusive ordinance to protect LGBTQ+ people in housing, employment, and public accommodations. In partnership with the [Dublin Community Task Force on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)—which made important recommendations for

racial and LGBTQ+ inclusion to the Council—residents and members of Rainbow Dublin did the hard work of changing hearts and minds on Council and sharing powerful personal stories about why a nondiscrimination ordinance was needed. They connected key decision makers with policy experts at HRC and Equality Ohio, and draft ordinances emerged. On November 15, 2021, after months of meetings and personal advocacy by local residents, Dublin City Council passed a fully inclusive nondiscrimination ordinance. Equality Ohio celebrates that Dublin has increased its score on HRC’s MEI from 45 to 100 due to the hard work of LGBTQ+ residents and allies, and the open minds and leadership of Council members.

# STANDING UP AGAINST STATE INACTION AND FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH

*When they go low, we go high.* This could be the motto of our amazing local municipalities in Ohio with regard to how they have responded to the state legislature's inaction for Equality for Ohio's LGBTQ+ community. Indeed, Ohio's municipalities have truly stepped up to protect LGBTQ+ youth.

**Four cities in Ohio—Reynoldsburg, Cleveland Heights, Cleveland, and Akron**—each unanimously passed local ordinances to protect LGBTQ+ youth against the widely documented harms of so-called conversion “therapy” in 2022. This has brought the total number of Ohioans with access to a remedy confronting such practices to 20% of the state's population. And the educational value about the harms and ineffectiveness of the practice will reach far *more* people, as each city condemning the practice helps change the overall narrative. This is particularly important because we know that the victims of conversion “therapy” practices often include innocent parents who *want* to provide what is best for their children and are deceived by the fraudulent promises of conversion “therapy.”

By doing this, our Ohio municipalities have taken a stand against a state legislature that has refused to meaningfully act on proposed state legislation to protect our youth during Ohio's 134th General Assembly. This is especially important right now when we are fighting a statewide legislative push to actually *harm* our LGBTQ+ youth through proposed bans on gender affirming care, access to sports, and the authentic discussion of LGBTQ+ issues and racism in our classrooms.

Equality Ohio is deeply proud of our local Councils, Mayors and City Administrators who have pushed back against these harmful statewide threats to our kids.

By taking action into their own hands, Reynoldsburg, Cleveland Heights, Cleveland, and Akron are working to make their communities a safe haven to support LGBTQ+ families and youth.



## ABOUT EQUALITY OHIO

Equality Ohio identifies and transforms systems and institutions so LGBTQ+ Ohioans can fully access legal and lived equality. We envision an Ohio where people are welcome, affirmed, and flourishing. Equality Ohio is proud to partner with amazing groups like HRC, PFLAG, the Trevor Project, and more in supporting our local municipalities achieve their full potential to protect LGBTQ+ residents.

Pictured at left: Lynn Readey (Equality Ohio board), Sandra Anderson (resident, former Equality Ohio O Board) Peggy Kilty (Rainbow Dublin) Jaron Terry (PFLAG) Maria Bruno (Equality Ohio) Michael Haynes (Rainbow Dublin) Bobby Weston (Rainbow Dublin) Alana Jochum (Equality Ohio) Joseph Soza (Equality Ohio)