Protecting LGBTQ+ Rights

Funding cuts, political attacks, limited representation, and decreased access to traditional resources have contributed to a challenging environment for LGBTQ+ Minnesotans.

A series of federal executive orders in January 2025 created chaos and uncertainty in the lives of transgender, nonbinary, gender-nonconforming, and queer people. While most of these orders are being challenged in court, the work of nonprofits who support these Minnesotans has never been more important.

For nearly four decades, PFund Foundation has supported LGBTQ+ organizations, entrepreneurs, and scholars in the Upper Midwest through community-led grantmaking and scholarships. The only LGBTQ+ foundation serving the Upper Midwest, PFund awarded $2.1 million in funding in 2025 and serves as a subject matter expert and partner to other community foundations, including the Minneapolis Foundation.

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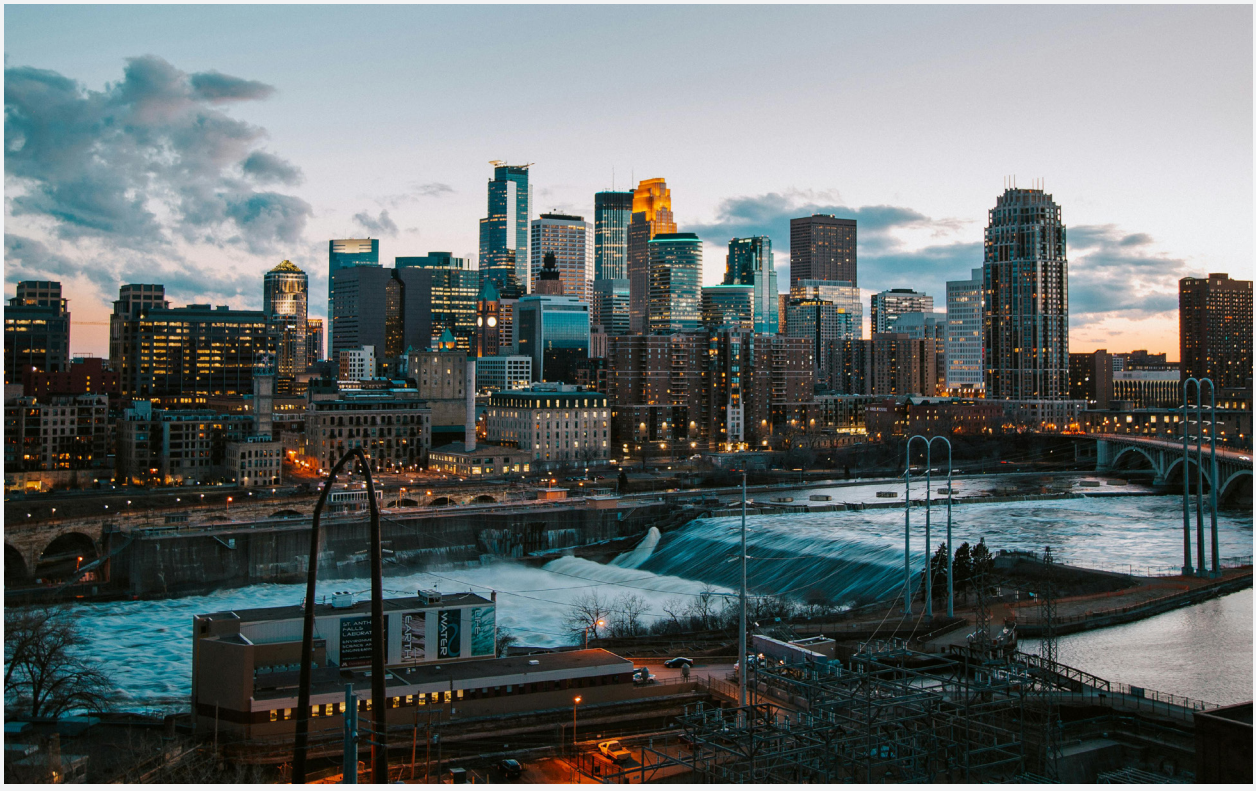
What's happening in Minnesota?

- Minnesota has historically been an inclusive, welcoming state: In 1993, Minnesota became the first state to explicitly ban discrimination based on gender identity and expression. In 2012, Minnesota became the first state to reject a voter referendum that aimed to define marriage as being between one man and one woman.
- In response to anti-trans legislation nationwide, Minnesota officially became a "trans refuge" state in 2023 through the passage of the Trans Refuge Act, which established legal protections for transgender people and their families seeking gender-affirming healthcare.
- This protection created a magnet for families and individuals relocating from states that have banned or restricted gender-affirming care. Today, Minnesota has the highest percentage of adults who identify as transgender in the country. According to a 2025 report from the Williams Institute at UCLA, 1.2% of Minnesota adults identify as transgender, compared with the national average of 0.8%.
- Healthcare providers in Minnesota have seen significant increases in inquiries about gender-affirming care, with organizations such as Children's Minnesota experiencing months-long waitlists.
- Current federal mandates and increased community intolerance have created adverse health effects for LGBTQ+ Minnesotans, including an increase in anxiety and a general feeling of lack of safety.
- LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly youth, are significantly overrepresented in Minnesota's homeless population. While only about 4% of Minnesotans identify as LGBTQ+, they make up roughly 11% of the overall homeless population and nearly 23% of homeless youth, according to the 2018 Minnesota Homeless Study.



Questions to Consider as You Explore This Issue

- What have you heard or read that influences your thinking?
- How does your own experience inform your giving?
- As you think about LBGTQ+ rights, is there a particular age group, population, or geographical location you want to support?
- How have you already invested in the issue, and how might you want to deepen your engagement?

Resources to Inform Your Giving

Whether you're exploring this topic for the first time or have been investing in LGBTQ+ rights for years, here are a few resources to expand your knowledge:

PFund's research and issue briefs highlight how inequitable access to resources have created disparities for LGBTQ+ populations in the Upper Midwest.

OutFront Minnesota promotes the human rights of LGBTQ+ Minnesotans and provides educational training statewide.

PFLAG is a national organization of cis-gender heterosexual allies dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQ+ people—from finding resources to support a loved one to learning how you can advocate for equal rights.

The Human Rights Campaign outlines the wage gap and poverty disparities experienced by LGBTQ+ workers in comparison to the rest of the workforce.

Understanding the Ecosystem of LGBTQ+ Rights

There are many ways to support the rights of our LGBTQ+ neighbors. PFund's goal of creating greater access to opportunity focuses on the following key domains.

How do you hope to make an impact? Consider these issues and key facts as you reflect on how you want to focus your efforts.

Education & Leadership

- Nationwide, political attacks on school and college campus DEI initiatives adversely affect LGBTQ+ students.
  - A 2025 Supreme Court ruling allows parents to opt their kids out of exposure to any book or lesson that includes LGBTQ+ individuals or themes.
  - The American Library Association found that 47% of banned books feature LGBTQ+ and BIPOC voices.
  - Since 2022, approximately 300 "Don't Say Gay" bills have been introduced in state legislatures, aiming to restrict or ban discussion of LGBTQ+ identities or issues in classrooms. At the federal level, Republicans in Congress have pushed for a nationwide "Don't Say Gay" policy for all K-12 classrooms.

  As a result, LGBTQ+ students and faculty face increased threats of erasure and intimidation for creating lessons and spaces where they can affirm their identities. According to The Trevor Project, 1 in 3 youth report poorer mental health due to anti-LGBTQ+ policies and legislation.

Economic Empowerment

- LGBTQ+ individuals face multi-layered economic disadvantages compared to cisgender peers. Often, a "chain effect" of discrimination begins with losing family support, extends through reduced educational opportunities, and culminates in systemic employment barriers.
- Queer and trans entrepreneurs have long faced significant barriers to accessing capital through traditional means. Recognizing the value of nourishing a robust LGBTQ+ business community, PFund's Equity Fund—supported by the Minneapolis Foundation—provides grants, monthly learning opportunities, and membership in Quorum, Minnesota's LGBTQ+ Chamber of Commerce.
- In response to the economic hardship small businesses faced during Operation Metro Surge, the Minneapolis Foundation partnered with PFund to issue $200,000 in grants to LGBTQ+ and BIPOC businesses in the Twin Cities.

Holistic Health

- With Minnesota becoming a trans refuge state in 2023, many individuals and families have relocated to the state to access services. Children's Minnesota reported a 30% increase in calls for services, and Family Tree Clinic of Minneapolis is working to scale up to meet demand.
- Healthcare providers in rural areas often lack the infrastructure, staffing, and specialized training to meet this growing demand.
- In 2025, PFund granted $750,000 to three Twin Cities healthcare organizations that provide gender-affirming care, enabling them to train new doctors and expand access to care in rural and underserved communities.

Vibrance & Community

- New laws threaten the vibrance and safety of the LGBTQ+ community. In July 2025, Iowa became the first state to remove gender identity as a protected class. Employers, landlords, hotels, restaurants, and other businesses are now free to openly discriminate against trans and gender expansive individuals.
- PFund believes visibility matters, especially in rural and conservative areas. Its PRISM Fund supports LGBTQ+ nonprofits that promote representation statewide, while its Sponsorship Fund supports regional Pride festivals, exhibits, theatrical productions, and cultural events.

Advocacy

- Advocacy requires an intersectional, collaborative approach to addressing inequities. The work of groups like OutFront Minnesota and the Human Rights Campaign span legislative advocacy, community organizing, and culture change through education and training.

Intersecting Community Issues

Consider how the rights of LGBTQ+ Minnesotans intersect with other community issues:

Housing

LGBTQ+ people are disproportionately represented in Minnesota's homeless population.

Health Disparities

Access to health care that is responsive to LGBTQ+ needs is limited, especially in rural areas.

Economic Stability

Roughly one in five LGBTQ+ adults in the United States (22%) live in poverty, compared to an estimated 16% of their straight and cisgender counterparts. In particular, the poverty rates of transgender adults (29%) and cisgender bisexual women (29%) in the U.S. tower over those of other groups. (Human Rights Campaign)

Mental Health

In a 2021 survey of LGBTQ+ Minnesotans, 80% of respondents reported experiencing moderate to severe mental distress. (Women's Foundation of Minnesota)

If your charitable interests span several of these issues, your Philanthropic Advisor can help connect you to organizations that are making an impact in multiple areas.

Next Steps

Reach out to your Philanthropic Advisor to continue exploring this issue. Use the prompts below to capture your questions and thoughts for the conversation:

I'm wondering...

I was surprised when I learned...

My interest in LGBTQ+ rights intersects with my charitable interest in...

I'd like to explore...

because I think/feel...

After hearing more about your interests and how you'd like to focus your efforts, your Philanthropic Advisor can support you by:

- Offering customized information about nonprofits working in areas of the ecosystem that you want to explore.
- Scheduling a tour or Zoom conversation with a nonprofit to help inform your giving decisions.