

**THE EXTREMISM OF
ANTI-LGBTQ POWERHOUSE
ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM**

Media Matters LGBTQ Program

ABOUT

“The extremism of anti-LGBTQ powerhouse Alliance Defending Freedom” is an interactive research book outlining the anti-LGBTQ positions of the influential legal powerhouse Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF). These positions were identified through extensive review of public statements by ADF and its representatives, reports on the group’s legal and political activities, and publicly available materials created by the group. Information regarding significant portions of ADF’s legal and political advocacy work is not publicly available; the group may hold additional positions or engage in additional activity that it refrains from commenting on publicly.

INTRODUCTION

Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) is one of the largest and most powerful anti-LGBTQ groups in the nation. The legal powerhouse raked in more than \$50 million in revenue in 2016 and has what it refers to as a “powerful global network” of over 3,200 “allied attorneys.” ADF is leading the fight against transgender student equality by attempting to sway, often successfully, local school policy across the country that affects basic protections for trans students, including their access to restroom facilities that align with their gender identity. The group actively works against efforts across the country to protect LGBTQ youth from the harmful and discredited practice of conversion therapy. It is also working to prevent LGBTQ people from adopting children by advocating for measures that would allow child welfare agencies to discriminate against prospective LGBTQ parents, among others. It has even targeted protections for transgender prisoners, who are at the highest risk for incidents of sexual violence in prisons and jails. ADF works closely with other influential and extreme anti-LGBTQ groups such as Family Research Council and Liberty Counsel.

In 2017, ADF represented plaintiff Jack Phillips, a Christian baker who refused to bake a cake for a gay couple, in the *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* Supreme Court case. In 2018, the Supreme Court narrowly ruled in favor of Phillips based on the particulars of the case, citing “hostility” the Civil Rights Commission showed against him and, thus, not indicating how similar court cases should play out. ADF is litigating several other cases that may determine whether businesses serving the public have the right to discriminate against LGBTQ people under the guise of “religious” or “artistic” freedom.



ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM

FAST FACTS ABOUT THE EXTREME ANTI-LGBTQ POWERHOUSE



Played a role in **54**
Supreme Court victories

Has special consultative
status at the **United
Nations**



Raked in over

\$50 million
in revenue in 2016



Has a “powerful
global network” of
over **3,200**
“allied attorneys”



Had at least **55** affiliated lawyers, fellows, and
former staff serving in influential government
positions at the state and federal levels in 2017



Has over **300**
allied organizations



Has received more
than **\$211** million
in pro bono hours



Trained more than **1,900**
law students from more than 225 law
schools in 21 different countries”
through its Blackstone Legal Fellowship



Has **63** staff attorneys

MEDIAMATTERS
FOR AMERICA

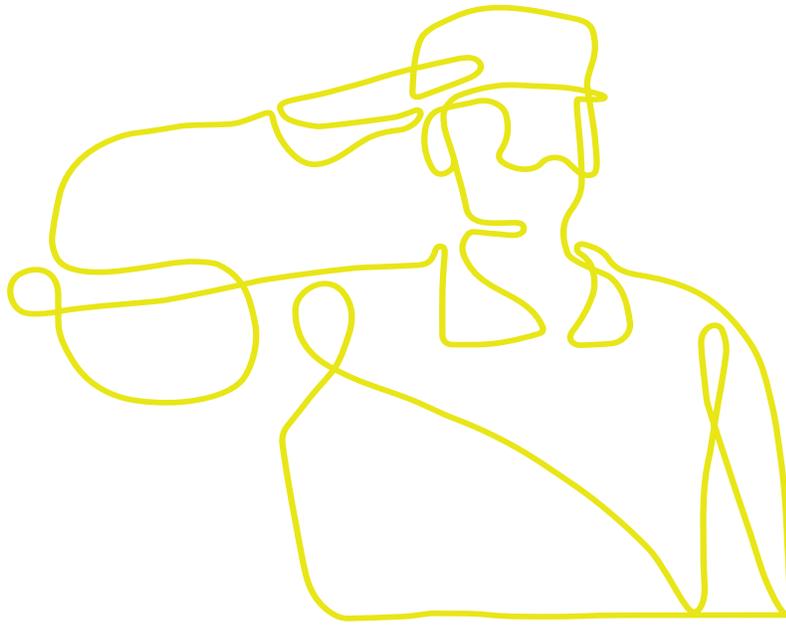


mediamatters.org



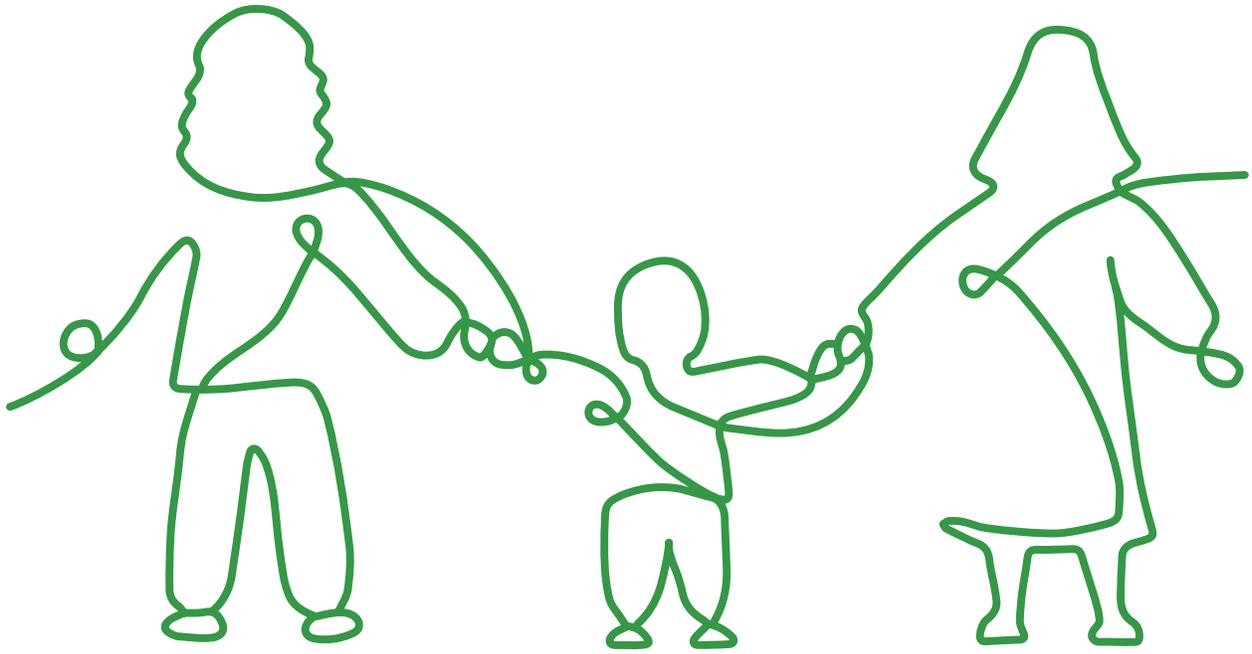
LGBTQ EXPRESSION AND LIFE

Has historically supported the criminalization of sodomy	11
Has supported laws that would punish sodomy by imprisonment	12
Has supported Russia’s so-called “gay propaganda” law	13
Opposes LGBTQ-inclusive hate crimes protections	14
Defended “don’t ask, don’t tell”	15
Has promoted the idea that a “homosexual agenda” threatens Christians	16
Works to legalize discrimination against LGBTQ people by businesses, in health care, and at work	17-20
Opposes marriage equality	21
Has said allowing same-sex couples to marry will destroy the institution of marriage	22



TRANSGENDER IDENTITIES

Supports policies and bills that would ban transgender people, particularly students, from using the restrooms that align with their gender identity	24-25
Touts bathroom predator myth	26
Spreads myths and junk science about transgender children	27
Denies transgender identity	28
Opposes policies allowing transgender people to change their identification documents to match their gender identity	29
Supports policies mandating that transgender people who are in prison be placed in facilities based on their sex assigned at birth rather than their gender identity	30
Opposes allowing transgender people to serve openly in the military and the use of defense funding for medically necessary treatment for transgender service members	31
Supports requiring surgery or sterilization of transgender people seeking to change identification documents or names	32



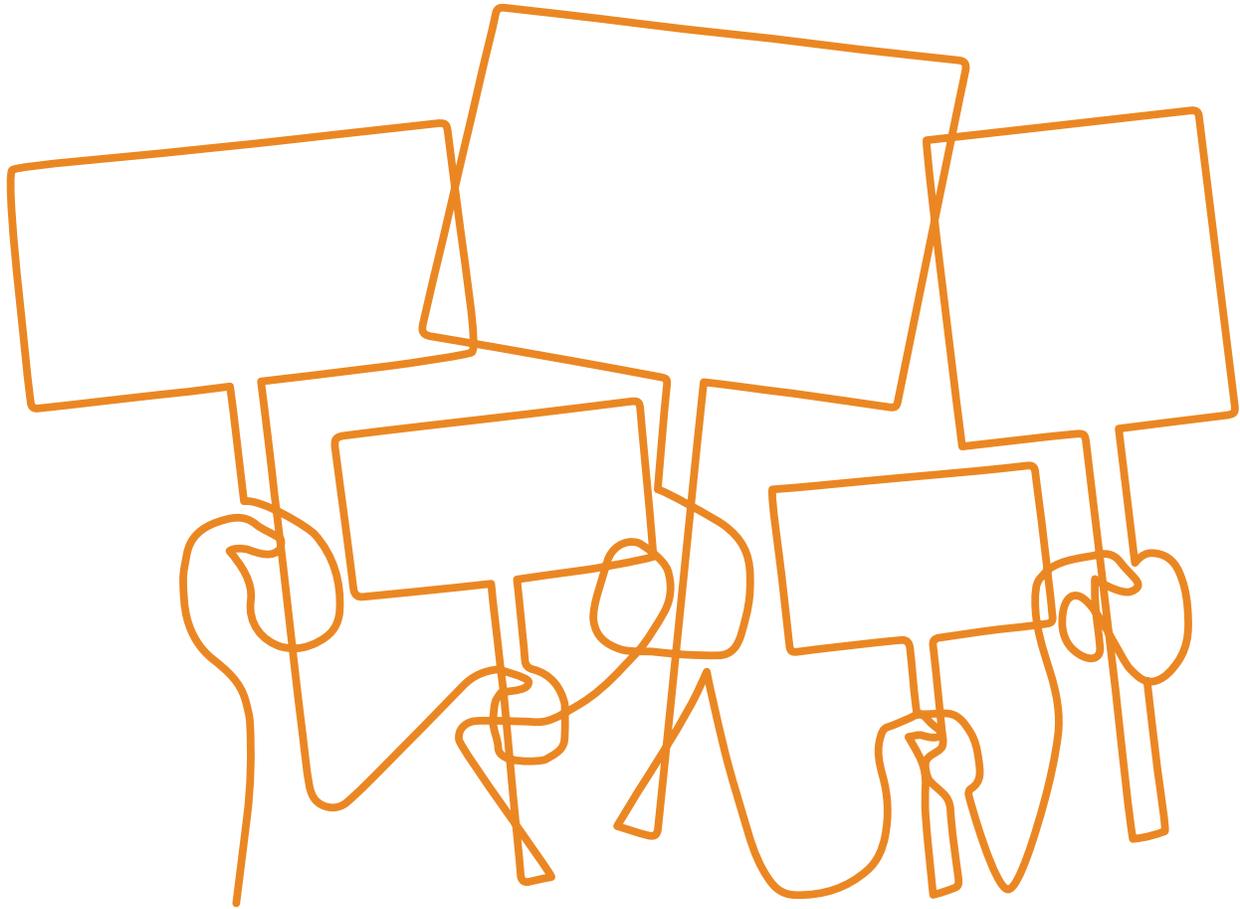
MINORS, STUDENTS, AND PARENTING

Spreads myths about LGBTQ parenting, such as that having same-sex parents is not good for children	34-35
Advocates against adoption and foster care by LGBTQ people	36
Opposes LGBTQ-inclusive curriculums and claims schools indoctrinate students into homosexuality	37
Opposes anti-bullying policies that protect LGBTQ youth	38
Has defended anti-LGBTQ teachers	39



MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Supports conversion therapy	41
Has called homosexuality a disorder	42
Has said high rates of mental illness among LGBTQ people are the result of their sexuality	43
Has disparaged the LGBTQ community using statistics about sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS	44



EXTREME RHETORIC

Has compared LGBTQ people to pedophiles and said gay people are more likely to engage in child abuse	46
Has stated that being LGBTQ is harmful to children and society	47
Has compared LGBTQ people and advocates to Nazis	48
Has claimed that Matthew Shepard's murder was not a hate crime	49
Has used other rhetoric to demonize LGBTQ people	50

**LGBTQ EXPRESSION
AND LIFE**

LGBTQ EXPRESSION AND LIFE

Has historically supported the criminalization of sodomy

- In 2003, ADF filed two amicus briefs in the *Lawrence v. Texas* Supreme Court case, one of which called “same-sex sodomy ... a distinct public health problem.” [Brief in support of respondent, Alliance Defending Freedom, [2/18/03](#), [2/18/03](#)]
- ADF called the *Lawrence* ruling, which struck down laws outlawing sodomy, “devastating” and has used the decision to raise money for its work abroad. [Alliance Defending Freedom, accessed [7/5/15](#)]
- In 2017, when a BuzzFeed reporter asked ADF President Michael Farris if he thinks same-sex sodomy should be legal, Farris reportedly “paused for several seconds” and simply responded, “It is legal.” The report noted that Farris was “still evasive though on just how he thinks homosexuality should be treated in the US in 2017.” [BuzzFeed, [12/4/17](#)]

LGBTQ EXPRESSION AND LIFE

Has supported laws that would punish sodomy by imprisonment

- Former ADF Global Executive Director Benjamin Bull applauded a 2013 decision in India to restore a criminalization statute that could punish sodomy with up to 10 years in prison, saying, “The Indian Court did the right thing.” India’s Supreme Court agreed to revisit the decision in 2018. [One News Now, [12/12/13](#); *The Washington Post*, [12/11/13](#); *The Guardian*, [1/8/18](#)]
- In 2012, ADF officials spoke at a conference in Jamaica focused on the idea that LGBTQ advocacy in the country, including a legal challenge to Jamaica’s anti-sodomy law, threatens “human dignity.” An ADF senior legal counsel addressed the conference, saying that “retention of the legislation prohibiting sodomy is the bulwark against” the so-called LGBTQ agenda. Jamaica’s law is still in effect and can punish LGBTQ people with “10 years of imprisonment with hard labor.” [Catholic Commission for Social Justice, [12/8/12](#); Human Rights First, [2015](#); *Washington Blade*, [7/24/17](#)]
- In 2013, ADF reportedly provided “advice, legal assistance and strategy” to efforts to defend a law in Belize that criminalized sodomy, punishing those involved in “carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any person or animal” with imprisonment for up to 10 years. Belize’s Supreme Court struck down the law in 2016. [7 News Belize, [7/29/13](#); Belize Criminal Code, [12/31/00](#); *The Advocate*, [8/10/16](#)]

LGBTQ EXPRESSION AND LIFE

Has supported Russia's so-called "gay propaganda" law

- In 2013, ADF published a nine-page memo supporting Russia's so-called "gay propaganda" law, which "effectively legalizes discrimination based on sexual orientation." ADF's memo claimed the country "has every democratic right to legislate in this area" and suggested that the law would protect "the psychological or physical well-being of minors." Human Rights Watch wrote in 2014 that the law's passage coincided with a "ratcheting up of homophobic rhetoric in state media and an increase in homophobic violence around the country." Similarly, Reuters reported in 2017 that hate crimes against LGBTQ "people in Russia have doubled in five years" following the law's passage, also noting that the law had been "used to stop gay pride marches and to detain gay rights activists." [Alliance Defending Freedom, [8/27/13](#); Human Rights Watch, [12/15/14](#); Reuters, [11/21/17](#)]

LGBTQ EXPRESSION AND LIFE

Opposes LGBTQ-inclusive hate crimes protections

- In April 2009, ADF attorneys sent a letter to the U.S. House Judiciary Committee opposing an LGBTQ-inclusive hate crimes bill, also writing that the U.S. Senate should not pass the bill. In a press release, ADF attorneys claimed that “the bill could severely impede Americans’ constitutional rights to freedom of religion and freedom of expression while creating additional legal protections for those engaged in homosexual behavior that are not available to everyone else.” ADF senior counsel Kevin Theriot also added that hate crime laws “serve only one purpose: The criminalization of citizens based on whatever thoughts, beliefs, and emotions they have that are not considered to be ‘politically correct.’ No one should fall for the idea that this bill does anything to bring about greater justice for Americans.” [Alliance Defending Freedom, [5/1/09](#)]

LGBTQ EXPRESSION AND LIFE

Defended “don’t ask, don’t tell”

- In 2011, ADF filed a friend-of-the-court brief arguing in support of the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy that forced gay, lesbian, and bisexual service members to hide their sexuality in order to serve in the military. The brief claimed that having gay people in the military would impede “morale, good order and discipline, and unit cohesion.” In an associated press release, ADF litigation staff counsel Daniel Blomberg argued, “Once the military is compelled to affirm homosexual and bisexual behavior, it will become an unwilling participant in the efforts to strike down the Defense of Marriage Act.” Blomberg also claimed that the troops’ “religious liberties are in unprecedented jeopardy because the government has caved in to pressure from small groups of activists to impose homosexual and bisexual behavior on our military.” In 2010, ADF also sent letters to Congress, President Barack Obama, and Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates in opposition to the policy. [Alliance Defending Freedom, [3/4/11](#), [7/22/11](#), [5/27/10](#), [4/28/10](#)]
- In 2008, ADF funded a friend-of-the-court brief on “don’t ask, don’t tell” in which ADF-allied attorney Steven W. Fitschen wrote, “When lawmakers have to decide between a military that can most effectively defend our nation and one that becomes a forum for social experimentation, the choice is clear: our nation’s security comes first.” Fitschen continued, “The military has certain obvious dynamics that make the inclusion of people who openly engage in homosexual behavior impractical.” [Alliance Defending Freedom, [6/9/08](#)]

LGBTQ EXPRESSION AND LIFE

Has promoted the idea that a “homosexual agenda” threatens Christians

- In a 2012 blog post, ADF wrote that “the homosexual agenda clashes with religious freedom.” [Alliance Defending Freedom, [10/26/12](#)]
- ADF founder Alan Sears and his former ADF colleague Craig Osten wrote in their book *The Homosexual Agenda* that “the homosexual agenda threatens religious freedom, and in particular, evangelism.” They also claimed that “if the homosexual agenda continues to go unchecked,” it will “silence” Christians. In 2012, Sears stood by his claim, explaining that “those who advocate the agenda want to not only stop all disagreement — they want to punish anyone who does. It’s a form of totalitarianism.” Sears and Osten’s book was recommended reading for ADF’s Blackstone Legal Fellowship as recently as 2015. [*The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today*, [2003](#); National Catholic Register, [1/18/12](#); Blackstone Legal Fellowship, [9/1/15](#)]

LGBTQ EXPRESSION AND LIFE

Works to legalize discrimination against LGBTQ people by businesses, in health care, and at work

- In 2017, ADF argued before the Supreme Court on behalf of Jack Phillips — a Christian baker in Colorado who refused to bake a wedding cake for a gay couple based on his religious beliefs — in the *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* case. In 2018, the Supreme Court narrowly ruled in favor of ADF's client based on the particulars of the case. The high court said the Colorado Civil Rights Commission showed “hostility” toward Phillips’ religious beliefs when one commissioner made “inappropriate and dismissive comments.” The ruling thus left “the possibility that other cases raising similar issues could be decided differently,” according to *The New York Times*. Religious exemptions cases such as *Masterpiece Cakeshop* could have broad repercussions for LGBTQ people and could legalize discrimination against them in the marketplace by allowing businesses to deny services and goods to LGBTQ people. [*The New York Times*, [9/16/17](#); [6/4/18](#)]
- In 2017, ADF advised Attorney General Jeff Sessions to write a sweeping Department of Justice memo on religious exemptions, which makes it easier for people and businesses to discriminate against LGBTQ people, among others, under the guise of “religious freedom.” [Vice News, [10/9/17](#); *Media Matters*, [10/6/17](#)]
- ADF has been involved in writing, supporting, and defending religious exemption bills in Indiana, Arizona, Georgia, Arkansas, Colorado, South Dakota, and West

LGBTQ EXPRESSION AND LIFE

Virginia. These laws give religious organizations, businesses, and individuals broad license to discriminate against LGBTQ people. [*Media Matters*, [10/11/17](#)]

- In Mississippi, ADF helped write, justify, and defend a religious exemptions law that has been called the “most sweeping and devastating state law to be enacted against LGBTQ people in the country.” According to the Human Rights Campaign, the law could allow faith-based organizations to “refuse to recognize the marriages of same-sex couples for provision of critical services including emergency shelter; deny children in need of loving homes placement with LGBTQ families including the child’s own family member; and refuse to sell or rent a for-profit home to an LGBTQ person.” In addition, Lambda Legal said the law allows “medical and social service agencies to discriminate against Mississippians based on so-called ‘moral’ objections.” [*Human Rights Campaign*, [10/3/17](#); *The Washington Post*, [7/21/16](#); *Media Matters*, [10/11/17](#); *Lambda legal*, [12/16/16](#)]
- ADF represented a client in Michigan who fired an employee for coming out as transgender. After the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit ruled against ADF’s client, ADF senior counsel Gary McCaleb said, “American business owners, especially those serving the grieving and the vulnerable, should be free to live and work consistently with their faith.” ADF’s news release on the case repeatedly misgendered the transgender employee. [*The Associated Press*, [3/7/18](#); *Alliance Defending Freedom*, [3/7/18](#)]
- ADF submitted public comment asking the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS] to rescind several

LGBTQ EXPRESSION AND LIFE

LGBTQ-inclusive protections that it categorized as infringing upon religious organizations' and other medical providers' "religious freedom." The comment, which denounced asking medical providers to "treat as valid the marriage of same-sex couples," came before HHS announced a new "Conscience and Religious Freedom Division" in January, which makes it easier for health care providers to discriminate against and deny medically necessary services to LGBTQ people. ADF praised HHS after it announced the creation of the division [Alliance Defending Freedom, [11/23/17](#), [1/18/18](#); NBC News, [1/20/18](#)]

- ADF represented the owner of a bed-and-breakfast in Hawaii who denied a room to a lesbian couple based on her religious beliefs. On its website, ADF claimed that the owner of the accommodations has the "right not to promote behavior her faith teaches is immoral" and is protected from associating "with people who are unwilling to respect her deeply held religious beliefs." [The Associated Press, [2/26/18](#); Alliance Defending Freedom, accessed [5/10/18](#)]
- In 2017, ADF asked the Supreme Court to take up a case regarding its client Barronelle Stutzman, the owner of a flower shop in Washington state who declined to provide floral arrangements for a gay marriage. [Alliance Defending Freedom, [2/25/18](#), *Tri-City Herald*, [7/14/17](#)]
- In 2018, ADF presented oral arguments to the Arizona Court of Appeals on behalf of the owners of a calligraphy studio, Brush & Nib, in Phoenix who filed a lawsuit in 2016 against the city's nondiscrimination ordinance "that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and

LGBTQ EXPRESSION AND LIFE

gender identity.” [Alliance Defending Freedom, [4/23/18](#);
The Associated Press, [10/27/17](#)]

- In 2018, ADF filed a brief to the Kentucky Supreme Court on behalf of the owner of a promotional apparel printer in the state who refused to print shirts promoting the Lexington Pride Festival. [Alliance Defending Freedom, [4/11/18](#)]
- In 2017, ADF filed an appeal on behalf of the owners of a video production company who had sued Minnesota in 2016 “arguing that a provision of the Minnesota Human Rights Act unconstitutionally prohibited them from refusing service to homosexual couples,” according to the *St. Cloud Times*. [*St. Cloud Times*, [10/20/17](#)]
- In 2018, ADF filed an appeal for a graphic designer who had unsuccessfully challenged Colorado’s Anti-Discrimination Act because she wanted to refuse services to same-sex couples and weddings. [Alliance Defending Freedom, [2/15/18](#)]
- For more examples, go [here](#).

LGBTQ EXPRESSION AND LIFE

Opposes marriage equality

- In 2015, ADF filed a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of the state of Alabama in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the Supreme Court case that made marriage equality the law of the land, arguing that the court should not rule in favor of same-sex marriage and calling “marriage between a man and a woman ... a universal good.” Regarding the brief, then-ADF legal counsel Doug Wardlow said, “The Constitution does not demand that one irreversible view of marriage be judicially imposed on all the states.” Wardlow continued, “The states should be free to affirm the essential role that marriage has always played in linking children to both of their biological parents. Maintaining these essential links surely constitutes a legitimate government interest, particularly in a time of increasing fatherlessness and broken homes.” [Alliance Defending Freedom, [4/17/15](#), [4/6/15](#)]
- ADF wrote or advised on language for same-sex marriage bans in Idaho, Colorado, and South Carolina. [Human Rights Campaign, accessed [2/13/18](#)]
- In 2017, ADF fought against marriage equality in multinational courts in both Latin America and Europe. [*Media Matters*, [1/19/18](#)]
- In 2016, ADF submitted a legal opinion supporting a constitutional amendment that would ban same-sex marriage in Romania. [*Politico*, [10/6/17](#); Alliance Defending Freedom, [4/25/17](#)]

LGBTQ EXPRESSION AND LIFE

Has said allowing same-sex couples to marry will destroy the institution of marriage

- In their book *The Homosexual Agenda*, ADF founder Alan Sears and his former ADF colleague Craig Osten said that same-sex domestic partnerships or civil unions “will eventually destroy the institution of male-female marriage.” *The Homosexual Agenda* was recommended reading for ADF’s Blackstone Legal Fellowship as recently as 2015. [*The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today*, [2003](#); Blackstone Legal Fellowship, [9/1/15](#)]

TRANSGENDER IDENTITIES

Supports policies and bills that would ban transgender people, particularly students, from using the restrooms that align with their gender identity

- ADF sent its model “Physical Privacy Policy” to public school districts across the country in August 2017. The policy advocated that transgender students use “restrooms, locker rooms, showers, similar school facilities, and school-related overnight accommodations” that match the “sex as listed on the person’s original birth certificate.” In addition, ADF sent letters to specific school districts and all districts in the state of Minnesota that often included veiled threats of litigation. [*Media Matters*, [11/27/17](#)]
- ADF and its allied attorneys have directly inserted themselves into numerous lawsuits involving schools and school districts across the country, either filing briefs in support of schools that implemented discriminatory policies or suing school districts in order to overturn trans-inclusive restroom policies. [*Media Matters*, [4/4/17](#), [11/27/17](#); *The Pathway*, [3/28/18](#)]
- ADF lawyers and allied attorneys have testified in or advised during several school board meetings against trans-inclusive policies in states including Georgia, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia. [*Media Matters*, [4/4/17](#), [11/27/17](#)]
- An analysis by *Media Matters* found that at least 10 of 28 anti-trans so-called “bathroom bills” introduced or active in 2017 had language resembling ADF’s model anti-trans policy. In one example, the introduced bill — Arkansas Physical

TRANSGENDER IDENTITIES

Privacy And Safety Act — was nearly identical to ADF’s model policy. Montana’s ballot Initiative 183, a “proposed 2018 ballot initiative that would force transgender people to use only those restrooms or locker rooms that match their biological sex as listed on their original birth certificate,” also mirrored language from ADF’s policy. At least two school district policies also had language mirroring ADF’s. [*Media Matters*, [4/4/17](#), [11/27/17](#)]

Touts bathroom predator myth

- An ADF FAQ document on anti-trans bathroom policies pushes the thoroughly debunked bathroom predator myth. The myth holds that sexual predators will exploit nondiscrimination policies allowing transgender people to use the restroom facilities that align with their gender identity in order to sneak into women’s restrooms. The myth has been repeatedly debunked by experts and government officials in more than a dozen states, by school administrators in dozens of school districts and universities, as well as by sexual assault and domestic violence prevention experts. ADF’s document claims that “cases exist where predators have used these harmful policies and ordinances to gain access to their victims when they are at their most vulnerable.” It also claims that trans-inclusive policies violate “the privacy and dignity of women and girls and is especially harmful to women who have experienced sexual abuse and who may experience trauma when forced to be present with a member of the opposite sex.” [*Media Matters*, [5/5/16](#); Alliance Defending Freedom, accessed [4/12/18](#)]

Spreads myths and junk science about transgender children

- In March 2017, former ADF legal counsel and current ADF allied attorney Douglas Wardlow sent a letter to a school board in Minnesota citing junk science from Dr. Paul McHugh, among others. Wardlow falsely claimed that “fostering cross-sex hormone treatments is ill-advised” and attempted to discount research finding severe stigma against transgender students. Multiple studies have found that hormone therapy is safe, and research shows that many transgender students face stigma and discrimination in schools. [Doug Wardlow for Attorney General, [March 2018](#); Alliance Defending Freedom, [3/15/17](#); ThinkProgress, [3/10/15](#); Endocrine Society, [2013](#); GLSEN and the Movement Advancement Project, [2017](#)]

Denies transgender identity

- In a 2016 lawsuit, ADF consistently referred to a transgender female as “male” and used male pronouns. [ThinkProgress, [9/9/16](#)]
- ADF has repeatedly referred to transgender girls as “boys who identify as girls,” often without even using the word transgender. [Alliance Defending Freedom, [11/12/15](#), [3/7/16](#), [1/16/18](#); Equality Case Files, [11/14/17](#)]
- A legal memorandum from ADF on an anti-discrimination law in Indiana states, “If a man were to change his driver’s license to indicate that his sex is female, he might be able to use that to access a women’s bathroom because, according to his license, his sex is female.” [Alliance Defending Freedom, [1/7/16](#)]

Opposes policies allowing transgender people to change their identification documents to match their gender identity

- In 2015, ADF lawyer Michael Norton spoke out against a bill that would allow transgender people to change the gender on their birth certificates. According to the Associated Press, “Norton said that transgender people deserve respect but that government documents shouldn’t be altered” and that “it allows a person to change what is historical and biological fact.” [The Associated Press, [3/26/15](#)]

Supports policies mandating that transgender people who are in prison be placed in facilities based on their sex assigned at birth rather than their gender identity

- In January 2018, *The Dallas Morning News* reported that ADF was part of “negotiations” with the Trump administration to undo Obama-era protections for transgender inmates that allowed them to sue prisons for violating their rights and to potentially be housed with members of their gender identity. ADF was representing clients in a lawsuit who argued that the presence of transgender women violates the rights of cisgender female prisoners. ADF lawyer Gary McCaleb said he was “pretty confident” that the Bureau of Prisons would alter its protections as a result of these negotiations, particularly regarding whether transgender women are housed with non-trans prisoners. Transgender inmates are frequently housed with members of the opposite gender and experience the highest reported incidents of sexual violence in prisons and jails. In May 2018, *The Dallas Morning News* reported that the Bureau of Prisons made “a major reversal” of the Obama-era protections and that “transgender women will now be housed in female prisons only ‘in rare cases.’” According to the report, McCaleb “declined to confirm whether the policy changes were a result of the Texas lawsuit” but said that he had “obviously been engaged in confidential negotiations.” [*The Dallas Morning News*, [1/4/18](#), [5/15/18](#); *Media Matters*, [1/10/18](#)]

Opposes allowing transgender people to serve openly in the military and the use of defense funding for medically necessary treatment for transgender service members

- In 2016, Daniel Briggs, who serves as ADF's legal counsel and director of military affairs, spoke out against the Obama-era policy that first allowed transgender people to serve openly in the military. In a column for The Daily Signal, The Heritage Foundation's news organization, Briggs argued that the policy threatened religious freedom and that "there is no military justification for this move." Briggs wrote, "Alliance Defending Freedom is ... standing alongside our service members and working aggressively to defend their freedom to live out their faith while in uniform." [The Daily Signal, [7/6/16](#)]
- Alongside the extreme anti-LGBTQ group Family Research Council and Heritage Action for America, ADF worked "on the Hill to convince members to support" an amendment "that would prohibit the Pentagon from using government money to 'provide medical treatment related to gender transition.'" The American Medical Association passed a resolution in 2008 recognizing "the effectiveness and medical necessity of mental health care, hormone therapy, and gender-affirming surgery as forms of therapeutic treatment." [*Foreign Policy*, [7/25/17](#); Lambda Legal, accessed [5/14/18](#)]

Supports requiring surgery or sterilization of transgender people seeking to change identification documents or names

- ADF International filed an intervention in 2015 to the European Court of Human Rights [ECtHR] arguing that European member states should be able to “determin[e] the most proportionate and appropriate means of promoting public order, public health and morals” in how and whether they allow transgender people to change identification documents. The intervention would thus support allowing countries to force transgender people to undergo surgery, including sterilization procedures, in order to change their documents. [Southern Poverty Law Center, [7/27/17](#); Alliance Defending Freedom International, [7/1/15](#)]
- In 2015 and 2016, ADF opposed bills in Colorado that would have allowed transgender people who have birth certificates from the state to change the gender on their certificates without undergoing surgical transitions or long court proceedings. ADF senior counsel Michael Norton submitted testimony against an earlier version of the bill in 2015, and according to *Colorado Springs Independent*, ADF “sent a representative to the House hearings to oppose the bill” in 2016. [Colorado General Assembly, [2/24/15](#); *Colorado Springs Independent*, [3/30/16](#)]

**MINORS, STUDENTS,
AND PARENTING**

MINORS, STUDENTS, AND PARENTING

Spreads myths about LGBTQ parenting, such as that having same-sex parents is not good for children

- On its website, ADF claims that “adults who grew up with LGBT parents” have “one thing in common — as children they craved the love and presence of their missing mother or father.” However, according to a review of research published in the Medical Journal of Australia, “Children raised in same-sex parented families do as well emotionally, socially and educationally as children raised by heterosexual-couple parents.” Likewise, researchers who completed a review of data from National Health Interview surveys found that “children raised in these [LGB] families have comparable psychological well-being compared with children raised by heterosexual parents.” Another study also found that children of same-sex couples “fare better than their peers when it comes to physical health and social well-being.” [Alliance Defending Freedom, accessed [5/16/18](#); *The Australian*, [10/23/17](#); *Newsweek*, [11/8/17](#); *Metro*, [2/14/18](#)]
- In 2015, ADF filed a friend-of-the-court brief in the *Obergefell v. Hodges* Supreme Court case arguing that biological parents are “best suited to provide optimal care for their children,” later citing flawed research by D. Paul Sullins that claims children with same-sex parents have emotional problems. According to *The Atlantic*, “many, many more studies reached opposite conclusions” to Sullins’ research. Additionally, in a press release about the brief, ADF cited extreme anti-LGBTQ group the American College of Pediatricians [ACPeds] claiming that studies “find that children with same-sex parents suffer substantially

MINORS, STUDENTS, AND PARENTING

reduced well-being.” ACPeds is a small organization whose name is meant to be confused with the legitimate medical organization the American Academy of Pediatrics that regularly pushes myths about LGBTQ people, including parents. *Psychology Today* wrote that ACPeds was formed in 2002 because of a few physicians’ belief that “gay parents are bad parents” and that the organization has “ignored key literature and issued a non-peer-reviewed report” on the matter, making it seemingly “the only group of physicians holding this stance.” [Alliance Defending Freedom, [4/7/15](#), [4/3/15](#); *The Atlantic*, [2/19/15](#); *Psychology Today*, [5/8/17](#)]

- On its website, ADF falsely claims that children with a lesbian parent are four times more likely to be raped than are those with straight parents and that children with a gay father are three times more likely to be raped. This claim comes from a flawed study by anti-LGBTQ researcher Mark Regnerus that has been debunked because he misclassified approximately one-third of respondents as having lived with same-sex parents when those children either “never lived with their same-sex parents or lived with them very briefly.” According to *The Washington Post*, “based on a re-evaluation of the data” used by Regnerus, “there are minimal differences in outcome for children raised by same-sex parents and married opposite-sex parents.” [Alliance Defending Freedom, accessed [4/11/18](#); NBC News, [4/8/17](#); *The Washington Post*, [5/10/15](#)]

MINORS, STUDENTS, AND PARENTING

Advocates against adoption and foster care by LGBTQ people

- ADF lawyers and allied attorneys worked in Georgia, South Dakota, Texas, Michigan, Mississippi, and Colorado to pass and defend legislation that allows child welfare agencies to discriminate against prospective parents who do not align with their religious beliefs, including LGBTQ people, interfaith couples, single parents, and others. [*Media Matters*, [3/2/18](#); Colorado Times Recorder, [4/25/18](#); Human Rights Campaign, [6/15/17](#)]
- In a 2009 case, ADF argued against a West Virginia lesbian couple that sought to adopt a baby they fostered. According to *The Nation*, “ADF noted that the couple had insisted that the court be ‘forced to treat their home as just as good as any other.’ But, ADF wrote, ‘this cannot be.’” *The Nation* also reported that “in another parenting case” in 2010, ADF “used the fact that the couple could not marry as an argument against allowing them to adopt,” arguing, “It is logical to prevent children’s exposure to the illicit sexual conduct and revolving-door of adult sexual partners that often accompany cohabitation.” [*The Nation*, [11/28/17](#)]
- ADF’s website says that attacks on “family values” include efforts to “allow those engaging in homosexual behavior to have preference to adopt children and be foster parents.” [Alliance Defending Freedom, accessed [5/30/18](#)]

MINORS, STUDENTS, AND PARENTING

Opposes LGBTQ-inclusive curriculums and claims schools indoctrinate students into homosexuality

- In 2012, ADF's Jeremy Tedesco and Matt Sharp wrote a legal memo to the Erie Community Unit School District in Illinois, which argued against the use of an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum produced by the LGBTQ organization GLSEN. The memo said that GLSEN's resources are part of an effort "to indoctrinate children with its radical pro-homosexual agenda, trampling parental rights in the process" and that it was "targeted at the most vulnerable and impressionable among us—our children." Remarking on the memo, Tedesco said, "Public schools should not be coerced by outside groups into indoctrinating students into homosexual behavior by exposing them to inappropriate sexual materials. Schools are supposed to be places of learning, not places where schools push propaganda on students." [Alliance Defending Freedom, [6/21/12](#); ThinkProgress, [7/6/12](#)]
- In 2016, ADF posted a blog lamenting Washington state's LGBTQ-inclusive Health and Physical Education K-12 Learning Standards, which teach that "there are many ways to express gender," promote "ways to show respect for all people," and define sexual orientation. ADF's blog said that the guidelines were "the perfect example of taking confused ideas about gender to its radical, social activist end," calling it "sexual orientation and gender identity indoctrination." [Alliance Defending Freedom, [7/1/16](#); Washington State Learning Standards, [2016](#)]

MINORS, STUDENTS, AND PARENTING

Opposes anti-bullying policies that protect LGBTQ youth

- In 2012, ADF and anti-LGBTQ group Focus on the Family created an “anti-bullying yardstick” to compare so-called “good” and “bad” anti-bullying policies. According to the tool, good policies do not “single out groups for special protection” based on things including sexual orientation and gender identity but instead prohibit “bullying against all students.” It also says anti-bullying policies should “not use materials or lessons plans from homosexual activist groups,” that a “bad” bullying policy “singles out ‘sexual orientation,’ ‘gender identity,’ etc. for special protection,” and that a “bad” policy “requires tolerance training and similar programs using materials and lesson plans crafted by homosexual activist groups.” ADF’s Matt Sharp commented on the release of the tool, calling LGBTQ-inclusive anti-bullying policies “oppressive” and saying they violate student rights. [Right Wing Watch, [9/5/12](#); Alliance Defending Freedom, [8/28/12](#), [8/28/12](#)]

MINORS, STUDENTS, AND PARENTING

Has defended anti-LGBTQ teachers

- In 2010, ADF represented University of Illinois professor Dr. Kenneth Howell, who was fired after he said that acting on same-sex attraction is “gravely immoral.” [Alliance Defending Freedom, [7/29/10](#), accessed [4/16/18](#)]

**MENTAL AND PHYSICAL
HEALTH**

Supports conversion therapy

- In 2014, ADF represented “ex-gay” proponent and conversion therapy practitioner Christopher Doyle, who claimed he could help LGBTQ people get rid of “unwanted same-sex attractions.” Doyle is the co-founder of pro-conversion therapy groups National Task Force for Therapy Equality (NTFTE) and Voice of the Voiceless and does work for several other pro-conversion therapy organizations. According to HuffPost, psychotherapist Catherine Chapman reviewed footage of Doyle’s practice and found that he used an “overwhelmingly unprofessional and manipulative demeanor” and “shame and guilt” on a patient, including telling him to “grow a pair of balls.” [*The Baltimore Sun*, [5/11/14](#); *Media Matters*, [10/10/17](#), [3/9/18](#)]
- In 2014, an ADF-allied attorney — whom the group has called “one of the ‘heavy hitters’ among the allied attorneys of Alliance Defending Freedom” — represented a plaintiff in New Jersey who was challenging the state’s law protecting LGBTQ youth from conversion therapy. [ThinkProgress, [7/31/14](#); *Media Matters*, [10/10/17](#)]
- In 2018, ADF published a legal memorandum opposing a California bill that would classify conversion therapy as fraud, and ADF attorney Matt Sharp appeared in print and local broadcast media to argue against the bill. [*Media Matters*, [4/2/18](#)]

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Has called homosexuality a disorder

- In their book *The Homosexual Agenda*, ADF founder Alan Sears and his former ADF colleague Craig Osten claimed that “homosexuality is ‘intrinsically disordered.’” *The Homosexual Agenda* was recommended reading for ADF’s Blackstone Legal Fellowship as recently as 2015. [*The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today*, [2003](#); Blackstone Legal Fellowship, [9/1/15](#)]

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Has said high rates of mental illness among LGBTQ people are the result of their sexuality

- In 2012, ADF lawyer Piero Tozzi said that even in places such as the Netherlands that are more tolerant and accepting of LGBTQ people, “depression and suicide rates [in the LGBTQ community] remain the same, or even higher.” He continued, “The depression still exists because the way they are living has its roots most often in childhood trauma, and is inconsistent with the way God designed us.” [Catholic Commission for Social Justice, [12/8/12](#)]

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Has disparaged the LGBTQ community using statistics about sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS

- In their book *The Homosexual Agenda*, ADF founder Alan Sears and his former ADF colleague Craig Osten said that the “sexual behavior” of “homosexual activists ... carries tremendous public health risks, including the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.” The book also pushed a myth from a 2003 *Rolling Stone* article that “25 percent of all newly-positive HIV positive men had contracted the disease” through “bug chasing, the behavior of homosexual men who deliberately engage in activities that could cause them to contract HIV/AIDS as a ‘badge of honor.’” However, *Newsweek* reported that the doctor who was quoted making that claim “says that attribution is made-up” and called it “totally false.” He also said, “When the fact checker called me and asked me if I said that, I said no. I said no. This is unbelievable.” Another doctor cited in the *Rolling Stone* piece who allegedly argued that “bug chasers are seen regularly in the Fenway health system, and the phenomenon is growing,” told *Newsweek*, “That is entirely a fabrication. That is ridiculous. I said, ‘We have seen a few cases, but we have no idea how common this is. It is not very common.’” *The Homosexual Agenda* was recommended reading for ADF’s Blackstone Legal Fellowship as recently as 2015. [*The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today*, 2003; *Newsweek*, [1/22/03](#); Blackstone Legal Fellowship, [9/1/15](#)]

EXTREME RHETORIC

EXTREME RHETORIC

Has compared LGBTQ people to pedophiles and said gay people are more likely to engage in child abuse

- In their book *The Homosexual Agenda*, ADF founder Alan Sears and his former ADF colleague Craig Osten called pedophilia and “homosexual behavior ... often intrinsically linked.” The book also falsely claimed that “there is a definite link as well between child molestation and later homosexual behavior.” *The Homosexual Agenda* was recommended reading for ADF’s Blackstone Legal Fellowship as recently as 2015. [*The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today*, 2003; Blackstone Legal Fellowship, [9/1/15](#)]

Has stated that being LGBTQ is harmful to children and society

- Remarking on the so-called “homosexual agenda” in their book, ADF founder Alan Sears and his former ADF colleague Craig Osten wrote, “The result is that the well-being of millions of children is at risk, along with the right of parents to protect their children from sexual exploitation.” *The Homosexual Agenda* was recommended reading for ADF’s Blackstone Legal Fellowship as recently as 2015. [*The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today*, [2003](#); Blackstone Legal Fellowship, [9/1/15](#)]
- ADF’s website claims that it supports the “unity of one man and one woman” in part because “weakening the family and undermining the values that support it will ultimately destroy our society.” [Alliance Defending Freedom, accessed [5/1/18](#)]
- In 2005, ADF published a pamphlet called “The Truth About Same-Sex ‘Marriage,’” which claimed that it is dangerous to children. The pamphlet said that if same-sex marriage was “allowed to continue, the societal costs for children and grandchildren would be profound,” adding, “Once same-sex ‘marriages’ are legally recognized, activist organizations will no longer have to ‘encourage’ schools to teach that homosexual behavior is acceptable, it could be law to do so.” The pamphlet also pushed claims saying that allowing gay men to marry “will make adultery more acceptable for all married couples” because they “have a need for ‘extramarital outlets.’” [Alliance Defending Freedom, [2005](#)]

Has compared LGBTQ people and advocates to Nazis

- In their book *The Homosexual Agenda*, ADF founder Alan Sears and his former ADF colleague Craig Osten claimed that “radical homosexual activist community has adopted many of the techniques used in Nazi Germany.” They wrote, “At first Nazi leadership feigned a desire for peace with Christian churches. ... Then the Nazis began tightening the screws.” The authors went on to say, “Breaking the back of Christianity in Germany was aimed at cutting off the education and formation of the rising generation from its heritage of faith [eerily similar to what is happening in government schools today].” They also wrote that LGBTQ people were waging “a war of propaganda, just as Hitler did so masterfully in Nazi Germany, to get the American public on their side.” *The Homosexual Agenda* was recommended reading for ADF’s Blackstone Legal Fellowship as recently as 2015. [*The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today*, 2003; Blackstone Legal Fellowship, [9/1/15](#)]
- In 2015, ADF President Mike Farris claimed that efforts to undo Indiana’s so-called Religious Freedom Restoration Act are “all about unilateral coercion” and are an example of “political correctness with the regimentation and force that Nazi Germany would be proud of.” [Right Wing Watch, [4/2/15](#)]

Has claimed that Matthew Shepard's murder was not a hate crime

- In 2014, ADF senior legal counsel Erik Stanley falsely claimed that the “narrative” that described Matthew Shepard’s brutal murder as a hate crime had been “debunked.” This is a popular tactic for conservatives who want to deny that gay people face harassment, discrimination, and violence. [*Media Matters*, [10/28/14](#)]

Has used other rehtoric to demonize LGBTQ people

- In 2007, former ADF senior counsel Austin Nimocks said, “In the end, those who profess to be ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian,’ or who have otherwise slipped in and out of homosexual behavior, including ‘cruising’ for anonymous partners, are people who succumb to a dangerous temptation.” [Townhall, [9/28/07](#)]
- In the 2012 meeting of the extreme anti-LGBTQ group the World Congress of Families, ADF founder Alan Sears said, “In the course of the now hundreds of cases the Alliance Defense Fund has now fought involving this homosexual agenda, one thing is certain: there is no room for compromise with those who would call evil ‘good.’” [World Congress of Families, [5/26/12](#)]
- In their book *The Homosexual Agenda*, ADF founder Alan Sears and his former ADF colleague Craig Osten claimed that “radical homosexual activists” are manipulating suicide statistics “for political gain and to entrap more children in a dangerous behavior.” *The Homosexual Agenda* was recommended reading for ADF’s Blackstone Legal Fellowship as recently as 2015. [*The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today*, [2003](#); Blackstone Legal Fellowship, [9/1/15](#)]

ABOUT THE *MEDIA MATTERS* LGBTQ PROGRAM

The *Media Matters* LGBTQ Program is an issue program of *Media Matters for America*, the leading progressive research and information center dedicated to comprehensively monitoring, analyzing, and correcting conservative misinformation in the U.S. media. The LGBTQ Program monitors and researches media coverage of LGBTQ issues and LGBTQ-related narratives at the local, state, national, and international levels with a focus on dismantling conservative misinformation harmful to the LGBTQ community.

Our team of dedicated researchers produces in-depth analysis, rapid response, and data-based studies on media coverage and conducts extensive research into anti-LGBTQ groups and media figures. Additionally, the *Media Matters* LGBTQ Program works with partner organizations across the country to share research, offer targeted media monitoring, and highlight LGBTQ issues and the bad actors affecting LGBTQ equality.

Report Authors: Rebecca Damante and Brennan Suen

Editing Support: Bushra Sultana and Brianna January

Book Design: Melissa Joskow