Poverty & Economic Injustice in the LGBTQ Community

Millions of LGBTQ people and their families live below the poverty line. Across the country, LGBTQ people continue to face significant economic insecurity despite stereotypes depicting our community as wealthy, white, and male.

Where We Are:

- Lesbian and bisexual women are significantly more likely to live in poverty.
  - 24% of Lesbian and Bisexual women make less than the federal poverty line (compared to 19% for heterosexual women).
  - 30% of bisexual women are food stamp recipients compared to only 18.2% of straight women.
  - Senior lesbian couples experience twice the poverty rates of their heterosexual female peers.

- Transgender people are four times as likely to be living in extreme poverty (making under $10,000 a year).

- LGBTQ families & youth also experience economic disadvantages at a high rate.
19.2% of children living with a female same-sex couple and one in four children living with a male same-sex couple are living in poverty, compared to only 12.1% of children living with different-sex couples.

These disparities are even more pronounced among people of color (POC) communities. For example, 52.3% of children living with an African-American male same-sex couple are living in poverty.

Of the 1.7 million youth who experience homelessness every year, 20-40% identify as LGBTQ.

Barriers and Misconceptions:
Among the factors that contribute to high rates of economic insecurity (though it’s impossible to list all of the roots of poverty in our community) include:

- **Family rejection:** Nearly 7 in 10 homeless LGBTQ youth identify family rejection as a major reason for their homelessness.

- **Unsafe schools:** Almost 1/3 of LGBTQ students drop out of high school before graduating, primarily due to hostile climate. Lower graduation rates make it much more difficult to earn a living wage.

- **Criminal justice:** 73% of LGBTQ people have had contact with a police officer in the last 5 years. Discriminatory laws and discriminatory enforcement against LGBTQ people leads to disproportionately high incarceration rates.
• Immigration status: There are nearly 1 million LGBTQ immigrants in the U.S., and 1 of every 3 is undocumented. Immigrants are largely excluded from the social safety net.
• Discrimination: Discrimination against LGBTQ people in housing, education, and employment leads to negative outcomes in stability and security.
• Health and Mental Health Care: Lack of access to culturally competent health and mental healthcare keeps many LGBTQ (and especially transgender) people poor. Health and mental health disparities associated with poverty are often cyclical—lack of treatment increases the economic burden of illness.
• Substance Abuse: 20-30% of LGBTQ people abuse substances, compared to about 9% of the general population. Self-medicating contributes to inability to find and maintain steady employment and increases health risks.

Current Actions:
The National LGBTQ Task Force is currently working to end LGBTQ economic insecurity by advocating for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act reauthorization, educating the public about LGBTQ homeless youth, calling for equity in the Federal tax system, advocating for federal and local non-discrimination protections, pushing Congress and the Administration for immigration reform, and pressing for a more equitable criminal justice system.

• Take action! Contact your Congress and ask them to support reauthorization of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.
• Stay informed. Get involved in our new Queer Our Taxes campaign.

Create change. Volunteer at your local LGBTQ-inclusive homeless shelter or food pantry.