



EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Pride in Our Workplace | Updated June 26, 2025

ENSURING SAFETY FOR THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY: PROTECTING OUR RIGHTS IN WORKPLACES & BEYOND

OVERVIEW

Recent dialogue among community advocates and subject matter experts has highlighted growing concerns around the safety and well-being of LGBTQ+ Individuals In Massachusetts. Key areas of focus include rising political violence, diminished psychological safety, inequitable access to healthcare, and a severe lack of resources for Black trans Individuals.

Strategic priorities emerging from the discussion emphasize the need for comprehensive, equity-driven policy solutions; investment in inclusive infrastructure and community services; and stronger civic engagement to counteract systemic disparities. Ensuring long-term safety and dignity for LGBTQ+ populations will require cross-sector collaboration, targeted resource allocation, and sustained policy attention.



Moderator:

- **Dallas Ducar** (She/Her) - EVP, Donor Engagement & External Relations, [Fenway Health](#)

Panelists:

- **Ricardo Martinez** (he/him) - Executive Director, GLAD Law
- **Justice Williams** (he/him) - Community Relationship Specialist, [Mayor's Office of LGBTQIA2S+ Advancement](#)
- **Shaplaie Brooks** (she/her) - Executive Director, [MA Commission on LGBTQ Youth](#)
- **Jordina Shanks** (she/her) - CEO, [Fenway Health](#)
- **Chastity Bowick** (She/Her) - CEO, [Chastity's Consulting & Talent Group](#)



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PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND COMMUNITY TRUST

Creating Affirming Spaces and Community Trust

There is an urgent need to prioritize psychological safety, particularly for trans youth and Black trans Individuals. Trust must be earned through culturally competent care, representation, and spaces that support vulnerability without fear.

Psychological safety is foundational to LGBTQ+ wellbeing, and with the current political and socioeconomic climate there is a strong and realistic fear of being misgendered or invalidated and it prevents many from seeking care and support.

*In 2023–2024, there were 36 recorded deaths of transgender individuals. **7 in 10 were people of color. 50% were black women.** ([Human Rights Campaign, "Epidemic of Violence Report", November, 2024](#))*



"We look for that security and being our true authentic selves - being able to show up without fear of judgment and discrimination, but with all that is happening - our community being the center of all the targets - it's really challenging to feel safe in this environment."

Jordina Shanks



"A large share of LGBTQ youth of color in Greater Boston are unemployed (32.7 percent), unstably housed (15.5 percent) and food insecure (30.9 percent)."

([Boston Foundation, "A Special Report of Boston Indicators and The Fenway Institute"](#))

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND LONG-TERM INVESTMENT

Addressing economic inequality in LGBTQ+ support

Many LGBTQ+ Individuals, particularly trans people, remain underinsured or unable to afford care. The conversation spotlighted the Transgender Emergency Fund, New England's only transitional shelter for trans and nonbinary Individuals - with just eight beds for a waiting list of 50+. This underscores the urgent need for trans-specific funding and the fragility of existing safety nets.

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BARRIERS TO HEALTHCARE AND GENDER AFFIRMING SERVICES

Breaking down systemic blocks to equitable care

The healthcare system remains riddled with access challenges.

- The weaponization of state and federal agencies, where funding for LGBTQ+, HIV, and gender-affirming care is under political threat.
- Insurance companies increasingly require burdensome documentation for gender affirming care - contradicting the intent of anti-discrimination laws.
- Even insured individuals are financially burdened by copays, making care inaccessible.
- A lack of inclusive practice in healthcare leads to worsened health outcomes as LGBTQ+ individuals delay or avoid care.



"I can't go places where I am able to put my identity into my whole body. I have to separate myself to get quality healthcare."

Justice Williams

Fast facts

- Nearly half of LGBT adults (46%) say there was at least one time in the past three years when they needed mental health services but didn't get them, including two-thirds (68%) of LGBT adults who describe their mental health as "fair" or "poor."
- Larger shares of LGBT adults compared to non-LGBT adults report having a negative health care experience in the past three years that caused their health to get worse (24% v. 9%), made them less likely to seek health care (39% v. 15%), or caused them to switch health care providers (36% v. 16%)

KFF, "LGBT Adults' Experiences with Discrimination and Health Care Disparities: Findings from the KFF Survey of Racism, Discrimination, and Health", April 2024

POLICY GAPS AND BUREAUCRATIC OBSTACLES

Reimagining systems that often exclude LGBTQ+ lives

This panel examined how well-intended policies often fail in practice:

- Sanctuary city designations do not always translate into safe or equitable access to healthcare or housing.
- ICPC (interstate Compact for the Protection of Children) policies require updated, inclusive reporting to reflect the realities of LGBTQ+ youth in care.
- There is a need for targeted programs that reflect intersectionality, addressing the unique experiences of LGBTQ+ youth, employees, and other subgroups.



"This is a time where you have to practice uncommon courage to show up, because we don't have a redo of this moment."

Ricardo Martinez

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ADVOCACY, VOTING AND SANTUARY PROBLEMS

Leveraging civic power to create safer communities

Panelists advocated for stronger community engagement in:

- School board involvement, where policy shifts are actively reshaping LGBTQ+ inclusion in education.
- State and local elections, as voting has direct impact on protections and rights.
- Destigmatizing conversations at home, which build a model for broader societal change.

HOLDING CORPORATIONS ACCOUNTABLE

Shifting from performative support to real impact

While the community cannot control which brands support LGBTQ+ causes, it can choose to uplift those that do. Panelists urged attendees to:

- Support authentically pro-LGBTQ+ companies.
- Call out superficial or seasonal allyship; consumer power was framed as a tool for accountability and culture-shifting.



"It's important to get involved with your schools, because what's happening in your schools... affects your neighbor, affects your nieces, nephews - everyone in your family, and what's happening in the world."

Shaplaie Brooks



"I have power over supporting the brands that are still with us, that are doubling down on their support for LGBTQ+ people. And I have power in having honest conversations with those who seem to be capitulating."

Ricardo Martinez

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DEI BELONGING, AND REAL INCLUSION

Moving beyond policies to lived experiences

DEI Initiatives must go beyond hiring goals and checklists. Real Inclusion requires:

- Accommodations that reflect lived experiences.
- Feedback loops from affected communities.
- Policies that are updated based on evolving needs; without these, DEI becomes hollow – and the sense of belonging remains elusive.

SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES AND INTERSECTIONAL ACTION

Recognizing Interconnected barriers to LGBTQ+ wellbeing

The community continue to face deep-rooted systemic Inequities:

- Lack of affordable housing, especially for trans youth.
- Unsafe placements for foster youth
- Immigration related marginalization

Speakers called for Intergenerational collaboration and Intersectional action, noting the power of shared knowledge and mutual support. “Find your place” was a resonant message.



“You can't fix everything.... how do you find your place of movement? You find your place by like, what is your passion? So I give this example. I'm going to show up to the march and I'm going to be screaming everything when we fight, we fix squat with love, all of the things. I didn't bring the signs, I didn't tell anybody I was going. I just went down there angry. So I'm like, I'm a verbal rising, right? And so my horizon, my verbal rising, feels pretty organized... You can tell your feet there are people up here that you can connect with and say, hey, just what is the next event? And then you'll find your perfect event.”

Chastity Bowick

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