



NEWS FROM
ULSTER COUNTY
County Executive Jen Metzger

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County Executive Jen Metzger Issues Executive Order Reaffirming Protections of Transgender Individuals from Discrimination

Order Issued on International Transgender Day of Visibility, March 31

KINGSTON, NY - Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger today signed an Executive Order on the Protection of Transgender Individuals and Prevention of Discrimination. The order was signed to coincide with International Transgender Day of Visibility, observed annually on March 31 to recognize the resilience and accomplishments of transgender people, raise awareness about the struggles they face, and promote the protection of their rights.

County Executive Metzger issued the order due to concerns about rhetoric and actions at the federal level targeting the transgender community. The Executive Order directs that the Ulster County Government shall strictly follow State and County Human Rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and expression. Last year, New York voters approved the Equal Rights Amendment to the New York State Constitution, which included equal protection for sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, among other classifications. Five years earlier, the State Legislature passed, and the Governor signed into law, the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act ("GENDA"), prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression. County Executive Metzger was a State Senator at the time and a co-sponsor of the law.

The Executive Order directs the County Department of Human Rights, working with the Ulster County Commission on Human Rights, to conduct education and outreach to promote a culture of respect and inclusiveness and prevent discrimination against transgender and all gender diverse individuals in housing, employment, education, and other areas.

“We are seeing very concerning actions at the federal level targeting transgender people, and we reaffirm our commitment to protecting everyone in our community from discrimination,” **said Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger.** “At the very core of a free democratic society is the understanding that individuals have rights to express themselves freely and be who they are. Everyone should feel safe, respected, and treated with dignity.”

“The Ulster County Human Rights Department is here for everyone, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their identity, are treated with dignity, respect and equality,” **said Director of Human Rights Joe McDonald.** “We stand for justice, inclusion, and the protection of human rights for all, including the LGBTQ+ community. Human Rights are universal for every person, including our transgender community, and everyone deserves the same freedom, opportunities, and protection under the law.”

“On this Transgender Day of Visibility, we stand in unwavering solidarity with our transgender and non-binary community members,” **said Peter Criswell, Chair of the Ulster County Legislature.** “In these uncertain times, when too many marginalized people feel afraid and unsure, it is more important than ever that we loudly and clearly affirm our support — not only for all members of our community, but especially for those whose rights and very existence are being targeted. Ulster County is committed to ensuring that every person is seen, valued, and safe.”

"In Ulster County, we stand firm in our commitment to protect and support transgender people, recognizing that they are cherished members of our families and vital threads in the fabric of our community,” **said Legislator Abe Uchitelle.** “Our commitment to transgender rights transcends politics — it is about recognizing the humanity in each person and creating a county where all can thrive.”

"When we care for and protect the most vulnerable (plus, brilliant and delightful!) among us, we care for and protect all of us," **said Isa Coffey, RN, Director of WiseBodies and co-founder of the Pink Pony Project.** "On today's Trans Day of Visibility, WiseBodies and the Pink Pony Project, two initiatives centering trans students, staff, and co-creators, offer our profound gratitude to County Executive Jen Metzger for her Executive Order on the Protection of Transgender Individuals and Prevention of Discrimination. Thank you, Executive Metzger, for your foresight and for your prescient leadership. May our nation follow the honorable path you are creating with your courageous, noble action."

"Whereas safety is a necessary condition of trans visibility, County Executive Jen Metzger's Executive Order offers a promise of protection and a model of moral courage for all to see,"

said Rabbi Jack Sherratt MAHL, LCSW, of Congregation Emanuel of the Hudson Valley.

"And while hate cannot be written out of existence, sanctuary can be written into reality. Through her principled leadership, Metzger exemplifies the Talmudic teaching that 'whoever saves one life saves the entire world' (*Sanhedrin* 4:5) both by saving trans lives and by sanctifying Ulster County as a place where the dignity, indeed the divinity, of all people is recognized and upheld."

"I applaud County Executive Metzger and her office for drafting this Executive Order, showing our community that local government stands ready to protect their rights. Codifying this support publicly is a meaningful gesture, sharply contrasting the White House narrative, and the silence even from allies in Washington," **said Richard Heyl de Ortiz, Executive Director of the Hudson Valley LGBTQ+ Community Center.** "From the LGBTQ+ Community Center, overlooking the courthouse where Sojourner Truth, against all odds, achieved justice, we draw inspiration for what is just and right — and this Executive Order reflects that energy for us today."

"The fundamental rights promised to every individual in this country are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. If we are serious about this promise then surely we must include LGBTQIA+ young people and the families that support them," **said Celeste Lecesne, Co-founder of both The Trevor Project, and The Future Perfect Project.** "Everyone has the right to be themselves."

"We recently hosted an event at Unicorn Bar that we called the 'Queer Apocalypse Community Assembly,' (facilitated by Issa Marcantoni and myself) in which we held space for our local LGBTQ+ community to share their grief around the current state of affairs as well as their hopes for the future. We are very grateful that Jen Metzger was in attendance that evening and that she is moving forward with actions to help support and protect the rights of our non-binary and trans community members," **said Francesca Hoffman, owner of Unicorn Bar in Kingston.** "This EO is the first step towards creating and implementing a safer, more inclusive and supportive environment for our trans and non-binary community members within Ulster County."

The Order also directs that the County government shall promote a safe and inclusive environment in County buildings, facilities, and services, including through continued implementation of the Preferred Name and Pronoun Plan. In June 2024, County Executive Metzger announced the newly adopted Preferred Name and Pronoun Plan, which recognizes that people may use a name other than their legal name, or pronoun, that reflects personal gender identity. This plan encourages an environment for personal expression, within

community standards, allowing employees to officially notify the County of their preferred first name that differs from their legal name for internal and external communications, phone directory, employment applications and onboarding materials, non-driver employee ID badges, personnel listing, and webpages. The Plan is best practice for supporting transgender and gender non-conforming employees.

If anyone in Ulster County feels discriminated against, they can reach out to the Ulster County Human Rights Department, at 845-334-5492, or humanrights@co.ulster.ny.us.

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