

Resistance, Resilience & Reempowerment: LGBTQ+ Nonprofit Response to the Trump Administration

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“Right now, we just need to get through the storm, and we need to be able to save ourselves to fight another day.”¹

Cristina Herrera, TransLatina Network

“Given what’s going on in the world, a lot of people are searching for something they can do. I don’t go out searching for more things that I need to do because the work we do every day is so meaningful ... It’s invigorating to work at a place where you’re working on the right side of history, but it is exhausting.”²

Cristina Jones, The Center

Introduction

The Trump administration’s anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-DEI policies pose an existential threat to queer³ organizations, particularly those that rely heavily on federal government funding. This is exacerbated by the virulent rhetoric against transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) individuals propagated by Mr. Trump and other conservatives, further marginalizing and threatening the lives of TGNC people. This paper highlights key themes that emerged during conversations with 15 organizational leaders (i.e., executives and board members) representing 11 LGBTQ+ nonprofits about how their constituents and organizations have been impacted by the current political environment, how they are responding, and how they see the future of queer organizations and the community at large. It is the start of a larger investigation into the LGBTQ+ collective and the nonprofits that serve them. Media reports and other sources are also included to provide context.

¹ Interview with C. Herrera, July 31, 2025.

² Interview with C. Jones, July 14, 2025.

³ Throughout this report, LGBTQ+ and queer are used interchangeably. The acronym “LGBTQ+” is inclusive of LGBTQ communities and individuals in all its diversity, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning, intersex, asexual, agender, two-spirit, non-binary, gender non-conforming, and all persons who identify as LGBTQ+.

An Assault on the LGBTQ+ Community

Within its first six months, the Trump administration has systematically eroded LGBTQ+ rights, mandating health care bans (AP, 2025), sports bans (Middleton, 2025; Yilek, 2025), bathroom bans (Newhouse, 2025), and a military ban (Middleton, 2025; Quinn, 2025). It has specifically targeted the TGNC community, which make up less than a percent of the U.S. population (Herman, Brown & Flores, 2022) but have nonetheless proven to be an effective flashpoint and rallying cry for social conservatives and MAGA hardliners (Czachor, 2025).

“The right in the U.S. is finding trans people to be politically useful,” Diana Adams, executive director of the non-profit Chosen Family Law Center, told *Context*. “They are scapegoating this group ... and making them the focus of distraction and propaganda (Lazo, 2025).” Gennifer Herley, Founder and Executive Director (ED) of TransNewYork⁴ believes that “the reason he goes after the trans community is that he’s [Trump] a numbers person. He knows that the community is only two or three million people, but he can embolden 20 million people. So, we are easy red meat.”⁵

On July 17, the federal government eliminated the national suicide prevention hotline’s specialized services for LGBTQ+ callers, with the White House describing it as a service where “children are encouraged to embrace radical gender ideology.” Since its launch in 2022, more than 1.3 million queer youth in crisis had been able to connect with counselors trained to understand the callers’ specific risk factors, trauma, and strengths. By the time of its termination, the hotline had received more than 2,000 calls a day (Black & Moutier, 2025; Middleton, 2025).

The cessation of this lifeline comes at a time when LGBTQ+ young people need it most. A leader of a youth organization, who asked to remain anonymous, said that they saw “a 30% increase in kids in January, February, March, and April alone each month over the previous month” accessing the

⁴ TransNewYork is a community-based nonprofit in Queens, New York (<https://transnewyork.org/>).

⁵ Interview with G. Herley, July 10, 2025.

nonprofit's mental health and accompanying services. "It is an indicator of the devastation this [current political administration] is having on our LGBTQ youth."⁶

The LOFT LGBTQ+ Community Center⁷ in White Plains, New York recognizes the importance of crisis lifelines. "One service that we have made available to our community is our helpline that provides resources to our community where folks either can call or email if they need resources related to housing, if they need resources related to name change, whatever it may be, they reach out to the helpline," said Danté R.H. Reda, the center's Chief Executive Officer (CEO). "We've always had a steady number of folks calling in, but it has definitely increased since January. We have seen a 42% increase between then and now, so we've had to call in volunteers to help us with the volume of folks that are calling in."⁸

At the state level, a record number of anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been introduced (see figure 1 below). As of July 2025, the ACLU has identified 598 pieces of legislation restricting LGBTQ+ rights from curriculum and other school restrictions to defining sexual identity to healthcare access barriers and funding restrictions (ACLU, 2025). "It seems like our new normal in the United States is simply having over 500 pieces of legislation really attempting to push transgender people specifically out of public life altogether," said Gillian Branstetter, ACLU's Communications Strategist (Lazo, 2025). Although, the Movement Advancement Project (MAP), an LGBTQ+ think tank, estimates that only one out of ten anti-LGBTQ+ state bills pass, activists argue that their very existence fuels anti-LGBTQ+ hate and exacerbates the fear and anxiety felt by TGNC individuals (Lazo, 2025).

"It has been a very anxious environment [for the transgender community]," confirmed Cristina Herrera, Founder and CEO of TransLatina Network⁹. "Yeah, things have really gotten so much more complicated since February, since the administration took control. We're seeing that our sense of safety,

⁶ Interview with a leader of an LGBTQ+ youth organization who asked to remain anonymous. August 7, 2025.

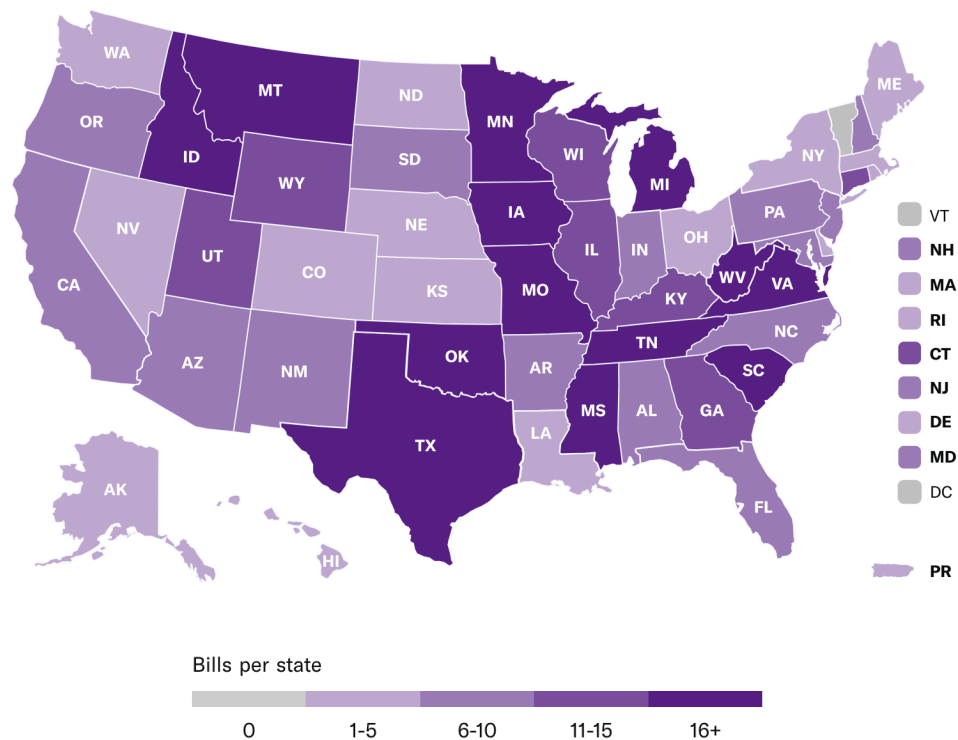
⁷ The LOFT LGBTQ+ Community Center offers peer support groups, educational workshops, community events, advocacy through its "Advocacy Hub," and vital LGBTQ+-affirming resources including legal, healthcare, and housing assistance (<https://www.theloftcenter.org/>).

⁸ Interview with D. Reda, July 23, 2025.

⁹ TransLatina Network advocates for the rights and well-being of transgender Latinas through leadership development, community education, and advocacy (<https://translatinetwork.org/>).

our sense of security, has faded away in so many different ways. We're seeing that in some parts of the country, we are not being honored with the protections that we historically had. We're also seeing that our healthcare is at risk.” She added that “more of our community is beginning to migrate into New York because of the anti-trans policies in their states. So, we have been seeing even more pressure on our resources when it comes to what we do for community.”¹⁰

Figure 1. The ACLU Anti-LGBTQ Bills Tracker¹¹



The White House’s anti-immigrant mandates and policies have also impacted the LGBTQ+ community, particularly queer immigrants and refugees. Among these are E.O. 14160 that seeks to end birthright citizenship (AILA, 2025a); E.O. 14163 that temporarily halted the U.S. Refugee Admissions

¹⁰ Interview with C. Herrera, July 31, 2025.

¹¹ ACLU, Anti-LGBTQ Bills, <https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights-2025?state=>

Program for 90 days (AILA, 2025c); E.O. 14165 that seeks to “secure the border”; and Proclamation 10886, which declared a national emergency to authorize expanded border enforcement powers, including troop deployment and border wall construction (AILA, 2025b). It is reported that daily deportation quotas of as many as 3,000 individuals have been established to aggressively ramp up removals (Gerstein & Cheney, 2025).

“It’s a very scary time,” said Aaron Morris, ED of Immigration Equality¹². “I will give you an example: I did a town hall a couple of months ago at the LGBT Center of New York City. And they sold out. There was a high demand and a thirst for knowledge and reassurance [among LGBTQ+ immigrants and refugees]. And the most common question I got was, ‘I have an application for status pending. Is it safe for me to show up for the interview, to go to court, to go to a check-in?’ And, you know, I think part of the tactic of the Trump administration is to scare people so severely that they don’t exercise their legal rights. Because in immigration, if you don’t show up for your hearing, interview, adjudication, whatever, you lose.”¹³

Fear is a common refrain among the organizational leaders interviewed. “There’s a lot of fear of deportation, of being sent back home, but there’s also a lot of fear of profiling and what that can lead to,” explained Daniel Puerto, Founder of Love Wins NYC¹⁴, a food justice nonprofit that distributes fresh produce through food pantries. “For example, in our TransLatina site, once there were [immigration] raids happening, the organization requested that we supply them with black bags to hide the fresh produce because they didn’t want to be profiled as individuals receiving free food because you don’t traditionally have clear bags that communities carry. The impact is large, right? There’s a lot of individuals that are also navigating chronic homelessness, whether they’re in shelters or street homeless or couch surfing,

¹² Immigration Equality advocates for the rights and protections of LGBTQ+ and HIV-positive immigrants (<https://immigrationequality.org/>).

¹³ Interview with A. Morris, July 31, 2025.

¹⁴ Love Wins NYC combats food insecurity by distributing fresh produce through multiple neighborhood food pantries (<https://www.lovewinsnyc.org/>).

carrying their items at all times with them because they don't know when they're going to get picked up [by immigration agents] ... There's a lot, a lot, a lot of fear.”¹⁵

The Trump administration’s anti-LGBTQ+ and “America First” policies have also reverberated globally. Among the 176 executive orders signed to date by President Trump¹⁶, E.O. 14169 was especially impactful, freezing all U.S. foreign development assistance programs for 90 days (The White House, 2025e). Worldwide, nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations that had relied on U.S. support received grant termination notices (Ehrt & Galil, 2025). These included local and community-based groups that provided scarce assistance to LGBTQ+ persons. Outright International reports that 120 grants to LGBTIQ¹⁷ organizations in 42 countries—from grassroots groups to national and regional organizations—were suspended, terminating violence prevention, health care, and legal support programs across Africa, Asia, the Pacific, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, and Latin America (Outright International, 2025).

This was followed by the evisceration of USAID, from 10,000 employees and contractors in the U.S. and around the world to 15 positions (Demirjian, Nolen, Crowley & Dias, 2025). In addition, Mr. Trump withdrew the U.S. from the World Health Organization (WHO), which greatly weakened the organization and in turn, the global health infrastructure, due to its heavy reliance on U.S. staff and expertise (Klein, 2025). The pullback of U.S. support of the global health system will greatly undermine care for LGBTQ+ people, specifically those living with or at risk of HIV.

Maria Sjödin, ED of OutRight International¹⁸, characterized the withdrawal of U.S. support as “an event of catastrophic magnitude.” She attributed the tremendous growth and professionalization of the global LGBTQ movement over the last couple of decades to U.S. support through the Global Equality

¹⁵ Interview with D. Puerto, August 7, 2025.

¹⁶ Federal Register, 2025 Donald J. Trump Executive Orders, <https://www.federalregister.gov/presidential-documents/executive-orders/donald-trump/2025>.

¹⁷ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer. Organizations that serve LGBTQ+ individuals use a range of acronyms including LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTQIA, LGBTI, etc. The A stands for asexual.

¹⁸ Outright International (originally known as the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission) is a global nonprofit that is dedicated to advancing human rights for LGBTIQ people worldwide through advocacy at the United Nations, movement strengthening, research, documentation of rights violations, and support of grassroots activists (<https://outrightinternational.org/>).

Fund¹⁹, which the U.S. administered, and through direct funding of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Sjödin estimated that the U.S. “has funded somewhere between 25 to 40 percent of the global LGBTIQ movement. And so, it means that there's an enormous loss of funding that will not be replaceable.”²⁰

Not surprisingly, the U.S. has also withdrawn from the United Nations Human Rights Council (Shivaram, 2025), which holds that:

Discrimination against LGBTI people undermines the human rights principles outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet discrimination and violence against people in the LGBTI community are all too common. Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and discriminatory attitudes towards intersex people remain deeply embedded in many cultures around the world (OHCHR, n.d.).

This U.S. retreat comes at the heels of international funding cuts for NGOs. Ehrt and Galil (2025) write that in November 2024, the Netherlands, the largest government donor to the LGBTQ+ movement, announced a 70 percent reduction of international development funding. Other countries, including the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Belgium, and France have also signaled reductions in foreign aid (Ehrt & Galil, 2025).

¹⁹ The Global Equality Fund was launched in 2011 by the U.S. Department of State as a public-private partnership that brings together governments, private sector entities, foundations, and NGOs to advance the human rights of LGBTQI+ individuals worldwide; it provides emergency assistance, short-term grants, and long-term capacity building to civil society organizations in more than 80 countries (source: <https://www.pgaction.org/news/global-equality-fund-annual-report-2015.html>).

²⁰ Interview with M. Sjödin, July 25, 2025.

Onerous Orders

Exceptionally harmful to nonprofits that serve the LGBTQ+ community in the United States are a series of executive orders issued during the first month of the second Trump administration, which significantly altered federal policies concerning diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) and gender identity, thereby adversely affecting the funding and operations of LGBTQ+ nonprofits nationwide. These include:

- E.O. 14168, *Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government*, which mandates all federal agencies to recognize only two sexes—male and female. It directs agencies to eliminate materials promoting “gender ideology,” cease funding for gender-affirming care, and prohibit the use of gender identity in official documentation and federal programs (The White House, 2025a).
- E.O. 14151, *Ending Radical And Wasteful Government DEI Programs And Preferencing*, which aims to dismantle DEI initiatives within the federal government. The order mandates the termination of all DEI programs, offices, and related contracts (The White House, 2025c).
- E.O. 14173, *Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity*, which revokes several prior executive orders that had established affirmative action and non-discrimination requirements for federal contractors. This new order prohibits federal agencies from enforcing policies that, in the administration's view, imposes "illegal preferences" based on these characteristics, emphasizing a return to “merit-based” considerations (The White House, 2025b).
- E.O. 14187, *Protecting Children from Chemical and Surgical Mutilation*, which mandates strict federal limits on gender-affirming care for minors by revoking federal support, funding, and policy backing for such care—specifically hormone treatments, surgeries, and other transitional procedures (The White House, 2025d).

These mandates led to immediate and existential implications for many LGBTQ+ organizations, especially those that rely heavily on government funding. In an interview with the Sacramento Bee, David Heitstuman, ED of the Sacramento LGBT Community Center said, “We do have another \$1.2 million in

federal funding that could be at risk depending on federal action [in addition to a newly terminated \$500,000 terminated federal grant]. So, we are in a very challenging position as an organization that's sort of at the top of the target list for the administration, which makes this funding even more vital (Cyrus, 2025).” In New York City, its LGBT community center (The Center) lost \$2.6 million in federal grant reimbursements.

Furthermore, the Trump administration's anti-DEI and anti-LGBTQ+ stance has had a chilling effect on corporate support of the LGBTQ+ community. This year, Pride events nationwide saw a marked decrease in corporate sponsorship. Kazz Alexander, co-chair of NYC Pride told NBC News that the organization “experienced maybe a dip in about \$750,000 in sponsorship.” Other Pride organizers lost an estimated \$200,000 to \$350,000 in funding from corporate sponsors (Eaglin, 2025). A report cited by *Forbes* indicated that 39% of all major corporations surveyed across all industries planned to pull back engagement in Pride celebrations. Sixty-one percent of survey respondents attributed this change to pressure from the Trump administration while 39% expressed concern about a conservative backlash. Companies that do continue to support LGBTQ+ organizations have chosen to be on the “down low,” requesting that their corporate logos not be included in promotional Pride materials. In an interview with *Fast Company*, Ben Garcia, ED of the American LGBTQ+ Museum, said, “These executive orders have made a lot of corporate philanthropy just take a beat.” He had initially anticipated that about 10% of the museum's budget would come from corporate partners, but he now estimates it to be no more than three percent. (Barker, 2025).

Morris (Immigration Equality) expressed his concern. “We get a fair amount of money from corporate America, from the law firms that work with us pro bono, and there are some questions about what will happen to that funding as some of the executive orders that the president issued are also orders that heavily imply that any lawyer helping someone with an asylum claim is practicing law unethically. We're seeing something of a chilling effect on the willingness of some, I mean, some of our strongest partners are still with us and will continue to be with us, but I have

concerns that if it becomes politically difficult to represent immigrants that we will not only lose the partners who are devoted or dedicated to what we do but also many of them who also donate on top of their pro bono work.”²¹

LGBTQ+ nonprofits now face the daunting challenge of addressing the growing needs of their constituents while navigating a landscape where not only is federal support diminishing or altogether withdrawn, but animosity towards the queer community is in full view and force.

The damage, however, is not only financial. “I would say that the most devastating impact or the greatest impact is the amount of fear and harm and hurt that the rhetoric, the executive orders, headlines have had, not just on the young people we serve, but on the coworkers,” shared a leader of a youth organization. “We have nearly 300 coworkers across the agency; 99% are queer people, 90% are queer people of color, about 30% are migrant individuals. The social impact, the emotional impact that the administration has had is perhaps the most devastating of all ... the emotional, the mental health detriments that this has caused is perhaps something that will take decades to fully understand.”²²

²¹ Interview with A. Morris, July 31, 2025.

²² Interview with a leader of an LGBTQ+ youth organization who asked to remain anonymous. August 7, 2025.

Resistance & Resilience: LGBTQ+ Nonprofits Respond

The defunding of programs, particularly those for TGNC individuals, has left the leadership of many LGBTQ+ nonprofits little choice but to reevaluate their operational strategies, seek alternative funding sources, and amplify advocacy efforts to maintain essential services. A handful have resorted to suing the Trump administration.

Reorganization. Soon after the results of the last Presidential election came out, nonprofits began anticipating and planning for an anti-LGBTQ+ White House.

“When results of the election came out, we knew the direction we're headed,” said Jeffrey Klein, Chief Operating Officer (COO) of The Center. “We had been preparing ... We prepared for what had been communicated [by then candidate Trump], what had been promised from that campaign, which was attacks against our community, against trans folks, non-binary folks, against immigrants, against people who the upcoming administration viewed as enemies or as those they needed to seek retaliation against.” Based on well-thought-out scenarios, The Center’s leadership accounted for the financial sustainability and safety of the organization’s community and its physical space, “given the way all the anti-trans rhetoric had evolved, which the Trump campaign had used to drum up support from its base, and the first actions the administration took,” explained Klein. He added that they prepared for “immigrants in our community to have a safe space, by developing and strengthening our policies around how we would handle any approach of immigration officers into The Center’s space which we consider to be private.”²³

Drastically diminished government funding has led LGBTQ+ nonprofits and social services organizations across the board to reevaluate programming and staffing. *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* estimates that from January 20 to June 30, the nonprofit sector lost at least 22,757 full-time jobs, which is likely a significant undercount; lay-offs could easily be higher than 40,000 due to the limitations of its main source, WARN databases (Worker Adjustment and Retraining

²³ Interview with J. Klein, July 22, 2025.

Notification Act), which are maintained independently by 48 states.²⁴ The conservative estimates for layoffs in Human Service Organizations, which include LGBTQ+ nonprofits, are 2,890.²⁵

To ensure the viability of The Center, the organization reorganized and terminated 14 positions, but it was at least able to reconfigure jobs and retain four employees rather than lose 14 valued staff members altogether. The uncertainty, however, has led individuals to seek more secure work and leave. “We’ve had several resignations since the start of the fiscal year [July 1],” said Cristina Jones, Chief People & Equity Officer of The Center. “Not a ton, but we just had someone leave since they thought they were going to be laid off and they ended up finding something else.” Jones added that her peers at other LGBTQ+ nonprofits also had to lay-off people. “We’re all in the same boat, dealing with a lot of uncertainty for staff due to uncertainty around funding, which just creates anxiety for staff.”²⁶

The numbers are more drastic for OutRight International. “We lost essentially 30% of our funding,” said Sjödin. “We had awards in the amount of \$10.9 million between the start of this year and 2027 that have been terminated. We have reduced our global staff by about 20% and we had to inform over 100 grantees in 50 countries that we had to terminate their grants.”²⁷

While executing difficult decisions, organizational leaders have been painfully aware of the toll on their employees. “We’re responding by embracing our coworkers and offering supports,” shared a leader of a youth organization. “We’ve increased mental health in the workplace. We’ve increased work groups around surviving these times. We’ve increased meditation groups and

²⁴ These data repositories require only large nonprofits and other employers to report layoffs affecting 50 or more employees and/or one-third of the total work force and have significantly different update patterns, reporting requirements, and enforcement mechanisms. Clearly, smaller nonprofits (those with fewer than 100 full-time employees) do not report.

²⁵ The Chronicle of Philanthropy. (n.d.). *Nonprofit layoff tracker*. <https://www.philanthropy.com/article/nonprofit-layoff-tracker>.

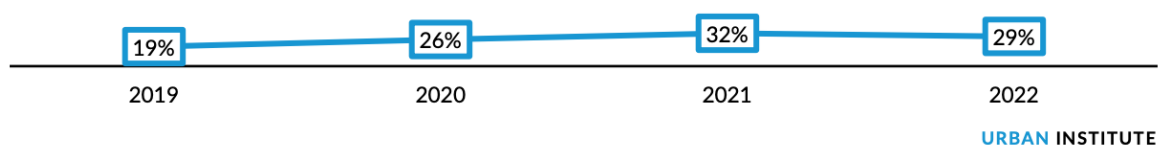
²⁶ Interview with C. Jones, August 14, 2025.

²⁷ Interview with M. Sjödin, July 25, 2025.

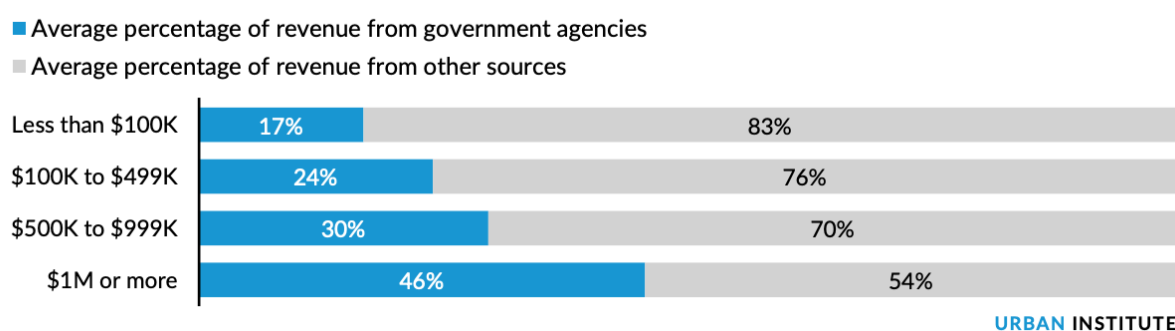
wellness groups and well-being. And we've done the same for our clients. So, we've responded to the humanity."²⁸

Diversifying Revenue Streams. Although it is a truism that a healthy and sustainable budget must include diverse sources of revenue, dependence on government funding is common among nonprofit organizations. According to the Urban Institute, the average percentage of revenue from government across all types of nonprofits is 29%. Among human service organizations, which include many queer organizations, the average is 32%. Moreover, the largest nonprofits received a greater percentage of their revenue from government agencies than the smallest nonprofits (Martin *et al.*, 2024). The executive director of a regional nonprofit serving LGBTQ+ victims of domestic and intimate partner violence told *The 19th* that their organization receives about 40 percent of its funding from the federal government (Barclay & Mithani, 2025).

Figures 2 & 3. Average Percentage of Nonprofit Revenue from Government Agencies²⁹



Sources: 2021, 2022, and 2023 National Survey of Nonprofit Trends and Impacts.



Source: 2023 National Survey of Nonprofit Trends and Impacts.

²⁸ Interview with a leader of an LGBTQ+ youth organization who asked to remain anonymous. August 7, 2025.

²⁹ Urban Institute, Nonprofit Trends and Impacts 2021–2023, <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/nonprofit-trends-and-impacts-2021-2023-national-findings-nonprofits-contact-agencies-regulate-charities-2022-2023>.

The Center's leadership has prepared various scenarios with implications for fundraising goals and strategies. Like other LGBTQ+ nonprofits, its development team has creatively and proactively sought new revenue streams that will make up for lost federal funding. Queer organizations have leaned more into private philanthropic support.

Indeed, some foundations have stepped up to address current and anticipated funding gaps by providing more funds and relaxing grant requirements (e.g., allowing overhead expenses). "I think they have been more intentional about supporting organizations that are doing trans-led work," shared Herrera (TransLatina Network). "And in our case, we also do immigrant-led work. [Foundations know] that we need to have the resources necessary to sustain ourselves and to make sure that we're meeting our community's needs. So, they have been able to continue to fund us and some of them have offered to give us funding for a period of two years instead of one year so that we could have a little bit more security." She also reported that the Ford Foundation, which had not funded the nonprofit before has expressed interest in helping the TransLatina Network.³⁰

However, the queer community cannot expect the philanthropic sector to make up for the enormous deficit due to diminishing support from the U.S. government. A report that tracks LGBTQ+ grantmaking by U.S. foundations underscores this reality: "Philanthropic funding for LGBTQ communities and causes from foundations based in the United States totaled **\$209.4 million in 2023** [emphasis added]. This is a decrease of approximately \$48.7 million or 19 percent from the total funding awarded for LGBTQ communities and causes in 2022.² When adjusted for inflation, funding fell 22 percent from 2022 to 2023. In addition, the authors of the report point out that "for every \$100 awarded by U.S. foundations in 2023, only 20 cents specifically supported LGBTQ communities and issues in the United States. This is a decrease from 25 cents for every \$100 awarded in 2022 (Lawther, Luffy & Frazer, 2025).

³⁰ Interview with C. Herrera, July 31, 2025.

A source that aggregates the total loss of federal funding to LGBTQ+ nonprofits does not exist, but a back-of-the-envelope estimate shows that \$209.4M of foundation support barely scratches the surface. A report on the financial health of leading queer organizations pegs the total revenue of 34 large organizations at \$308.3M (Movement Advancement Project, 2023). Using the Urban Institute’s average percentage of nonprofit revenue from government, that is 29%, the estimated lost government revenue of the 34 nonprofits is \$89.4M. Another study shows that approximately 200 LGBTQ+ community centers in the U.S received government grants totaling more than \$117 million (Movement Advancement Project & CenterLink, 2024). These two estimates already add up to \$206.4M and only reflects a subset of visible, large-scale organizations and doesn’t include thousands of smaller LGBTQ+ nonprofits and other social services organizations that also serve queer individuals.

Aside from foundations, nonprofits have also reached out the broader community. “We are seeing much greater community support for queer nonprofits in the face of the pullback from federal and corporate funding sources,” said Garcia (American LGBTQ+ Museum). “I’m seeing that advocacy and social service organizations that treat the whole community are making cases being made effectively to the community that people need to step up right now.”³¹

At the end of the day, however, institutional and individual philanthropic giving will not suffice. Richard Burns, a long-time leader of the LGBTQ+ community, summed it up well. “Certainly, individual donors are and can be and should be a source of massive support for our community’s institutions. But the role of government in social service delivery to vulnerable populations—those resources could never be matched by private philanthropy. Funding available via the federal government dwarfs the collective resources of private philanthropy, the foundation world, or corporate philanthropy.”³²

Litigation. A couple of weeks after the White House unleashed a barrage of executive orders, the executive committee of The Center, composed of senior board and administrative leadership³³, convened

³¹ Interview with B. Garcia, July 15, 2025.

³² Interview with R. Burns, July 10, 2025.

³³ For full disclosure, I am a member of the board of directors of The Center and sit on its executive committee.

to decide whether the organization would join a lawsuit led by Lambda Legal³⁴ against the Trump administration. A thorough risk assessment was presented and despite the potential danger to the nonprofit and to individual board members and executives, everyone agreed without hesitation that The Center must participate in the lawsuit. “We were founded during the AIDs crisis,” a board member said, “it is in our DNA to take care and fight for our community.”

Nine LGBTQ+ organizations³⁵ sued the Trump Administration arguing that three executive orders “seek to erase transgender people from public life, defund the organizations that provide them with life-saving services, and terminate equity-related grants essential to the health and lives of other underserved communities, including communities of color, and people living with HIV (Butz, 2025).” The lawsuit, *San Francisco AIDS Foundation v. Trump*, filed in the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of California, challenges executive orders 14168, 14151, and 14173 (see above). It argues that these mandates violate the U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment by limiting the organizations’ free speech, the Fifth Amendment’s Due Process Clause, and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment; as well as the Administrative Procedures Act.

“I do think the lawsuit was a wise decision,” said Jones (The Center). It was a boost to the morale for our staff. Us deciding to join that lawsuit and fight was huge for our staff, even if no one knows where this will end or how long it will take ... We’ll see what it means going forward. But I do think it was meaningful for staff that we are fighting.”³⁶

On July 15, Lambda Legal announced that the federal government restored more than \$6.2 million in grant funding to nine organizations involved in the lawsuit (Lambda Legal, 2025). Although federal funding has been restored, organizational leaders are aware that the Trump Administration can

³⁴ The Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc. (“Lambda Legal”) is a national organization working to achieve full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and everyone living with HIV, through impact litigation, education and public policy work (<https://lambdalegal.org/>).

³⁵ The nonprofit organizations involved in the lawsuit include four organizations based in California (San Francisco AIDS Foundation, Los Angeles LGBT Center, GLBT Historical Society, San Francisco Community Health Center); one in Arizona (Prisma Community Care); one in New York (The NYC LGBT Community Center); one in Pennsylvania (Bradbury-Sullivan Community Center); one in Maryland (Baltimore Safe Haven); and one in Wisconsin (FORGE).

³⁶ Interview with C. Jones, August 14, 2025.

choose to halt funding at whim. Moreover, it is safe to assume that federal grants that end during the current regime will not be renewed, particularly for LGBTQ+ nonprofits.

As of writing, the National LGBTQ+ Bar Association and Foundation has counted 18 lawsuits filed against E.O. 14168, four against E.O. 14151, and four against E.O. 14173.³⁷

Active Resistance. A common sentiment among leaders interviewed was that of resistance to the current regime. Immigration Equality's Morris shared what he was told by his mentor, the first trans woman who founded a national nonprofit: in times of significant adversity, "What you must do is try to win. If you can't win, slow it down. If you can't slow it down anymore, make them pay politically." Morris argued that this is "a tried-and-true approach to how to act in a time of increasing autocracy. You know, I and Immigration Equality are not going to be cowed. We will not be silenced. We will not be threatened. Not existing, not doing the right thing, not sticking our neck out. We are lawyers. We are human rights attorneys. We will continue to do everything in our power to stop them, slow them down or make them pay politically."

For its part, the American LGBTQ+ Museum is increasing the number of archival works it houses, including clothing worn by drag and ballroom performers and the stoles of queer religious leaders. "We will be collecting a lot more [than we had thought] and making sure that the physical evidence—the receipts for our history—are preserved in organizations that are private nonprofits [and] queer run," Ben Garcia, its E.D. said. "Right now, that's the only place that we would be recommending someone keep their stuff." (Barker, 2025).³⁸

LGBTQ+ nonprofit leaders are doing their best to steer their organizations through these turbulent times through reorganization, diversification of funding streams, litigation, and active resistance. "I know that trouble won't last always and that we have to right-size for this moment to meet the conditions," said

³⁷ The LGBTQ+ Bar, Trump Anti-LGBTQ+ Executive Order Litigation Tracker, <https://lgbtqbar.org/programs/trump-executive-order-tracker/> (accessed August 1, 2025).

³⁸ Garcia had the Smithsonian in mind, which has been co-opted by the Trump administration.

Melanie Willingham-Jaggers, ED of the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN).³⁹ “And if we’re doing it right, which I’m hoping I’m doing it right, we are making sure that we’re taking in all the information about what the current crisis is to strategically plan for how we meet this moment, live through this moment, and be around for the rebuild of it. That’s my goal.”⁴⁰

³⁹ GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) works to end LGBTQ-related bullying and harassment through research, educator training, inclusive policy development, and signature campaigns such as Day of Silence and No Name-Calling Week.

⁴⁰ Interview with M. Willingham-Jaggers, July 2, 2025.

Reempowerment: Moving Forward

LGBTQ+ organizational leaders are aware of the uncertainty that lies ahead but far from being disheartened or deterred, they are clear-eyed, energized, and hopeful. They anticipate a transformed sector, leaner but more focused. They see the need to come together, though the mechanics around such convergence is not clear and are only now being discussed and developed. They acknowledge the need to communicate in a way that brings people in and rallies the queer collective and its allies.

The Sector Shifts. “One year from now, the LGBTQ+ movement will look considerably different,” predict Julia Ehrt and Gabriel Galil of ILGA World⁴¹. “It will be less vibrant, smaller, poorer, and with diminished ability to resist and document human rights violations on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics (Ehrt & Galil, 2025).”

Klein (The Center) agreed with this prediction. “I think that future government funding will be very different for organizations like The Center and really, for nonprofits, regardless of what community or identity they serve. The social safety net is being gutted and the goal [of the government] is to reduce funding. Over the next few years, we will see that that [government funding] is shrinking and the social service sector and the nonprofit sector will be much smaller and look much different than it does right now. I think there'll be consolidation within the sector. I think there'll be organizations that are forced to consider how they work together and reduce costs through consolidation. There are already organizations that have shut down, that have been impacted by most of this. If you're 70, 80, 90 percent federally funded and the funding goes away, there's not much to do. So, I think we will continue to see that over the next few years. And we're going to do a blend philanthropy, individuals and foundations, and hopefully companies.”⁴²

“I think the smaller ones are going to struggle,” said Dr. Carla Smith, CEO of The Center. “And we're going to see whether or not they can weather the storm or if there needs to be some consideration of

⁴¹ ILGA World is a worldwide federation of more than 2,000 member organizations from 170 countries campaigning for the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex people since 1978 (<https://ilga.org/>).

⁴² Interview with J. Klein, July 22, 2025.

consolidation. If not merger, then assumption of programming [consolidation and/or coordination].” She conceded that larger nonprofits like The Center will be impacted. “It’s not a given, just even based on size, but I think that organizations like The Center and even smaller ones will have to spread their wings in order to survive.” She believes that there is “a real need to step back and stop and look at what you’re doing—literally landscaping. You’re really taking a view of what you have in front of you, how that’s being impacted, and taking time to strategically think about the ways in which you move. This is a moment in time, but with an eye on the future.” She shared that she has seen other nonprofit leaders engaging in this strategic practice. “Mapping is what we all have to do, and not just for this moment. You need to do the short-term mapping, but it’s a little bit longer-term mapping that we don’t always do on a regular basis.”⁴³

Time to Unite. Some leaders have suggested that the queer community and its nonprofit providers must unite to provide for the community now and in the future. After all, who else has and will?

“We’ve always had to take care of ourselves and each other, right?” argued Garcia (The American LGBTQ+ Museum). “We as a community have enough resources to take care of our community members. We just have to organize. I think we got out of the habit as a community. The ways in which lives have been different for New Yorkers and Californians than they have been for Texans and Ohioans has been a real problem in terms of organizing ... the opportunity around this administration is to mobilize organized resistance and organized support for our community.”⁴⁴

This is especially urgent as some LGBTQ+ advocates have noted the Trump Administration’s singular approach to the queer community. “Donald Trump ran for president on an age-old platform of divide and conquer,” said Brandon Wolf, the Human Rights Campaign’s national press secretary. “Inside the LGBTQ+ community, Donald Trump ran his campaign saying, I’m not targeting all LGBTQ+ people, just the trans people, and if you sacrifice that community, perhaps you will be spared.” Mr. Trump has found a ready audience among gay cisgender conservatives such as the Log Cabin Republicans, who

⁴³ Interview with C. Smith, July 16, 2025.

⁴⁴ Interview with B. Garcia, July 15, 2025.

believe that the White House's anti-LGBTQ+ policies do not endanger their personal freedoms (Czachor, 2025).

One Community, Divided. However, is unity possible considering cleavages within the queer community based on gender and sexual identity, race and ethnicity, class, political affiliation, and geography? Furthermore, LGBTQ+ nonprofits are siloed according to organizational size, service area, and constituencies.

“We have always had a diffuse movement,” reflected Burns. “It's both a strength and a weakness of our movement, and more often it's a strength that we have many leaders with strong opinions and strong wills differing in their overlapping visions. And I think sometimes when people express a longing for a single unified movement, we have to remind ourselves that that's not true of other movements either. The Black Civil Rights Movement was not a single movement. The feminist, the women's movement, was not a single movement. There were many leaders who fought with each other one day and worked together on another day. And that's very much our movement. There certainly have been times in the last 50 years when we've had good alignment, such as around demanding government response to the AIDS crisis, around military service, around marriage equality, but it's only in hindsight that you can sort of find unified movements there. At the time they felt chaotic and multi-headed.”⁴⁵

“I do think that more mutual aid models will emerge, and our community will try to take care of each other and do what we can, but it won't be the same,” said Klein (The Center). “People [will] need community to come together and to figure out how to do whatever we can, but it certainly won't be the progress we've made or the world we were living in six months ago, a year ago.”⁴⁶

Herley (TransNewYork) proposed the formation of cooperatives. “I think we need to form actual cooperatives because everybody's fighting for every nickel. Our community is still working out of silos. Yes, at times we support each other, but the L. doesn't support the G., the B. and the T. doesn't like the G.

⁴⁵ Interview with R. Burns, July 10, 2025.

⁴⁶ Interview with J. Klein, July 22, 2025.

And it even goes by generation as well. Older people don't want to help the younger people. Younger people don't want to go to the older people. And, you know, all of this is very complicated. It is extremely complicated, and it is something that you just can't knock down because people are fighting for every nickel they can get.”⁴⁷

Willingham-Jaggers (GLSEN) has her doubts. “Here's what I think is particularly pertinent for this moment, which is us [LGBTQ+ nonprofit leaders] being able to go to brunch together or kiki⁴⁸ together or whatever, friendly on the surface, even friendly personally. Doesn't mean that there's a way for our organizations to link arms, organizationally or even programmatically. Because so much of the landscape is entrepreneurial.” Moreover, she added that “a moment of scarcity is a really terrible time to try to partner with people that you don't trust. And I think that the LGBT movement overall has more of a competitive than a collaborative way of working with each other. The way we as entities do it like we as queer people do, which is like I'll hug you and kiss you on both cheeks and not actually like you or not do anything with you.”⁴⁹

Aside from the challenge of unifying to achieve a common vision and approach, it is a question whether the collective, particularly LGB individuals, will rally behind the transgender community, which is the current regime's prime target and the most marginalized even within the LGBTQ+ collective, Klein qualified his optimism. “I believe, and from what I see at The Center, a lot of people will. Do I have confidence that those with the most will come to their aid? That those who have the greatest access to resources will step up and give money? That the wealthiest in our community will fund at the level that they funded when they were personally impacted, whether it was the AIDS crisis, whether it was the seeking full marriage rights or whatever other efforts? I hope so, but I don't actually believe so. I would

⁴⁷ Interview with G. Herley, July 10, 2025.

⁴⁸ In LGBTQ+ (especially Black and Latinx queer) slang, a “kiki” is a social gathering, often informal, playful, and full of laughter, gossip, and camaraderie.

⁴⁹ Interview with M. Willingham-Jaggers, July 2, 2025.

like to be surprised, and I will operate as if there's hope for that to happen, but I don't know that I think that it'll play out that way.”⁵⁰

Immigration Equality’s Morris echoed this sentiment. “I worry that there is a piece of the queer community that identifies as rich more than they identify as queer. So, there will be many who band together, who fight together, who fight to help the most vulnerable among us. And there will be others who, unless they are directly attacked, will probably just continue living out their lives.”⁵¹

“And there are donors who think that way. Absolutely,” confirmed Smith (The Center). “It’s very disappointing to me, the lack of empathy that you hear sometimes. However, I’m not afraid to remind people where we’ve come from and the responsibility we have to each other as human beings. I try to connect people too, through something that they can connect with in some way, shape or form, even though they may not be perfect with a particular identity. I don’t know of any LGBT identified person who hasn’t had any bump no matter what your intersections are. So, it’s trying to make that connection for people ... it is through conversations, right?”⁵²

In terms of having enough resources within the community itself, historic data shows that only a fraction of LGBTQ+ people gives. The LGBT Giving Report, which was release during the first Trump administration, begins with a rationale behind the project that emphasizes this reality:

For decades, the financial contributions of LGBT people have fueled our movement and built our community organizations. But **contrary to popular belief, most LGBT organizations then— and even today—constantly struggled to raise money, including from individual donors** [emphasis added]. While individual giving represented—by far—the largest source of potential support, data compiled by the Movement Advancement Project (MAP) indicated that at most **only 3.4% of LGB people in the country were giving to the 39 largest LGBT advocacy organizations in the nation** [emphasis added]. Moreover, there was a surprisingly small pool of donors giving \$1,000 or more a year—under 15,000 in the entire country! (LGBT Giving Project, 2020)

⁵⁰ Interview with J. Klein, July 22, 2025.

⁵¹ Interview with A. Morris, July 31, 2025.

⁵² Interview with C. Smith, July 16, 2025.

One Community, Decentralized. “I think that's where places like The Center and local community groups will come in. It will be critical,” said Klein (The Center). “It's not going to be organization-based, I don't know that it's necessarily going to be a top-down lead where there's large national organizations or large institutions painting the path and people are signing up for where to follow. I think it's going to be more grassroots and people will have to organize and gather; the infrastructure that our community has in places like The Center and community centers across the country will become key places that our community uses to get organized, similar to the ACT UP⁵³ days, similar to how we needed to form our own activism, our own institutions, our own work, our own efforts, our own mutual aid and care for each other, those are the things that will continue to happen. And I think that's where places like The Center or other community centers will be so critical.”⁵⁴

Smith (The Center) shared that LGBTQ+ organizational leaders are beginning to discuss how they can come together differently, especially as they are forced to narrow and focus the scope of their work due to the dramatic decrease in government support. “What are the constrictions that are happening here versus over there, and how can we figure out where we still meet community needs based on either things that we have in common that we're doing or things that we used to do but aren't going to do anymore? There have been some groups like youth groups that are coming together and talking about how they could work together differently. What are the things that we need to be doing in order to make sure that our community is taking care of itself? I think there's different collaborations that are going to come.” She also believes that the relationship between nonprofit service providers and donors is evolving. “There's also thinking about ways to be in space with funders. I've been in space with funders, donors, foundations, with other organizations, to say this is what we're dealing with. And you don't typically see that type of engagement, but donors, foundations are thinking about this differently, too.”⁵⁵

⁵³ ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) is a grassroots activist group founded in 1987 to advocate for people with HIV/AIDS through direct action and public protest. During the AIDS crisis, ACT UP organized protests, die-ins, and campaigns to demand faster drug approvals, increased research funding, and an end to discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS.

⁵⁴ Interview with J. Klein, July 22, 2025.

⁵⁵ Interview with C. Smith, July 16, 2025.

As organizations focus and streamline their programs and services to survive the current political and policy environment and to get to the “other side” intact, those that do survive will find themselves leaner and more efficient. Unable to provide a range of programs for multiple constituencies, LGBTQ+ nonprofits will benefit from collaborating and coordinating services.

A New Infrastructure. How might this collaboration and coordination happen? A sponsoring entity is necessary, one that has the capacity and influence to convene nonprofit leaders and convince them to break down siloes and work together for the benefit of the entire queer community.

Smith (The Center) explained that a group of organizational heads are engaging with a foundation to develop a program that would facilitate a new nonprofit infrastructure, inspired by The Center’s Activist-in-Residence Fellowship.⁵⁶ “We have the Activists-in-Residence program that’s more internal. We have developed this captains-type program where we nurture the organizing skills of 15 to 20 captains. They each have their own teams so that when needed, we can activate the teams and their communities ... We’re [nonprofit leaders] thinking this could be a model in some way, shape, or form.” She wonders if this model could be scaled up. “Can we build an extended arm, people who are activists who want to engage in some sort of action? We don’t know what that is. It could be giving testimony in Albany⁵⁷, it could be moving around the city participating in different things.” Nonetheless, she is optimistic about philanthropic support. “We believe we’re getting this funding. We’ve had conversations with a foundation.” She also envisions a new nonprofit infrastructure emerging. “I can see us perhaps partnering with other organizations who are doing some of that work too to come together at some point to build a greater network. We have people who are doing many different things ... I think that we will

⁵⁶ The Activist-in-Residence fellowship is an opportunity for established or emerging activists with bold, cutting-edge ideas for advancing LGBTQ+ rights to invest in their political projects and bring visibility to timely issues facing LGBTQ+ people in New York. Through this fellowship, The Center seeks to contribute to social justice movements by empowering the next generation of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color) leaders who are committed to transforming social and economic conditions, and to advancing equity and opportunity for the LGBTQ+ community in New York (<https://gaycenter.org/advocacy/fellowship/>).

⁵⁷ Referring to the New York State Assembly.

need to come together differently and think about it. It is going to be interesting to see what this looks like.”⁵⁸

Beyond the Rainbow. The idea of organizations coming together extends beyond the LGBTQ+ community, as all social groups have been impacted by the Trump Administration’s actions. Queer organizations and allied movements must convene to learn from each other’s experiences and to share strategies and best practices for resilience, transformation, and sustainability.

“Our movement has struggled to be a good partner to broader movements for justice,” said Willingham-Jaggers (GLSEN). “And we have struggled because—I’m just going to be frank here—the LGBT movement, in this current iteration, got here by moving away from every other issue of political and social importance, except for our own issue. Said slightly differently, and maybe a little bit less kindly, our movement was hijacked by the fight for [same-sex] marriage ... My point is this: queer people will continue to lose to the extent that we fail to have a political ideology. There is no shared political understanding or framework for our movement. That’s number one. We will continue to lose until we understand what our political North Star is and what we are actually fighting for. Number two, to the extent that we are only fighting for ourselves, any victory we get will turn into a defeat very quickly because we are only securing it for us ... even when we win, we will lose.”⁵⁹

“There’s certainly opportunity to work together. Sometimes shared struggle can bring communities together,” said Klein (The Center). “Other times, when resources are constrained, it makes us fight against people who we’re aligned with for those limited resources. I don’t know if I know which one it’s going to be, but I think it’s important that we come together. I think it’s important that we be in coalition and in community with progressive causes, with social justice movements, whether it’s reproductive rights, whether it’s immigrant groups. Folks advocating for ending racism and advancing the

⁵⁸ Interview with C. Smith, July 16, 2025.

⁵⁹ Interview with M. Willingham-Jaggers, July 2, 2025.

work of civil rights for people of color. I think that there is no shortage of movements that can come together and form coalition. And I hope that that will happen.”⁶⁰

Puerto (Love Wins NYC) offered a way for LGBTQ+ groups to be open to and in solidarity with other groups. “Our model is innovative and unique. We're intergenerational and we don't lead through an LGBTQ agenda. We lead through an LGBTQ lens, which is extremely different and new. We focus on service provision but through an inclusive LGBTQ affirming lens, that way we continue advocating for and on behalf of LGBTQ people without being discriminatory—we don't exclude anyone from our services. But if you're homophobic, you may want to consider twice before coming to Love Wins NYC because we won't take that ... Our power to lead through an LGBTQ lens has allowed transgender individuals to look in the eyes of someone wearing a hijab or a burqa and say hi to each other and not ignore each other's existence. That did not come by being an LGBTQ service agency. That came because we are an LGBTQ-led agency.”⁶¹

“I think in some ways we have, we need to rediscover the art of and the act of organizing,” mulled Odell Mays, who has been in the trenches since the 1980s. “In a way that we haven't been called upon to do as a community in a very, very long time. And it's going to be much tougher to do because as the community has morphed and expanded and become more integrated into mainstream society, you've got people who are going to be picking and choosing their own place.”⁶²

Advocacy. For the LGBTQ+ nonprofits to serve the needs of its community, state and local governments need to step up and help fill the funding gap. Elected officials must also uphold the human rights of members of the queer community. It is up to LGBTQ+ groups, individuals, and allies to mobilize and hold legislators and other elected leaders accountable.

“It’s really, really hard to replace hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars in grant funds with \$20 donations,” David Heitstuman, Executive Director of Sacramento LGBT Community Center said.

⁶⁰ Interview with J. Klein, July 22, 2025.

⁶¹ Interview with D. Puerto, August 7, 2025.

⁶² Interview with O. Mays, July 7, 2025.

“With all the economic uncertainty and the lack of availability of funding at the federal and state level, we really do need to see local officials step up and support our business (Cyrus, 2025).”

Undeniably, this is more feasible in states with majority Democratic legislatures such as New York, where state and city lawmakers have advanced bills safeguarding the access to care for TGNC individuals. Three state bills expanding protections for gender-affirming care are waiting to be signed into law by Gov. Kathy Hochul. In the meantime, the City Council has passed legislation protecting medical institutions that provide gender-affirming services and negotiated a budget with record funding for health care, housing and employment programs for trans New Yorkers (Hayward, 2025).

Communicating the Cause. To convince donors and allies to financially support the LGBTQ+ community and legislators to enact favorable laws and policies, the queer community’s leaders and nonprofits must articulate and argue their case in a highly polarized environment and toxic moment in time, even within the LGBTQ+ collective itself.

Philosopher Jack Maden argues that before all else, “we must cultivate clear thinking: we must guard against the slogans and social pressures that berate us into looking at things a certain way. ‘They are wrong; we are right!’ voices will tell us ... We must resist propaganda and cease viewing the world through the lens of tribal conflict. We must dismiss the rhetoric that places ‘us’ above ‘them’, that renders ‘us’ worthier or more virtuous than ‘them’, that risks chipping away our humanity and reducing us to mere instruments of force ... We must instead strive, as difficult and uncomfortable as it may be, to recognize every single human being — including those on ‘the opposing side’ — as a fellow sufferer, subjugated by force, sharing a common human lot, worthy of dignity and deep compassion (Maden, 2025).” It is crucial that LGBTQ+ leaders, advocates, and nonprofits communicate in a more open and less strident way.

In a New York Times article entitled “Transgender Activists Question the Movement’s Confrontational Approach,” Jeremy W. Peters writes, “Now, some activists say it is time to rethink and recalibrate their confrontational ways and are pushing back against the more all-or-nothing voices in their

coalition.” In the piece, Rodrigo Heng-Lehtinen, E.D. of Advocates for Trans Equality⁶³ is quoted as saying, “We have to make it OK for someone to change their minds ... We cannot vilify them for not being on our side. No one wants to join that team ... No one wants to feel stupid or condescended to.” This need to calibrate the message must be considered seriously. “The public does not appear to be growing more empathetic to the transgender cause,” argues Peters. “Fewer Americans today than two years ago say they support some of the rights that LGBTQ activists have pushed for, like allowing children to undergo gender transition treatment, according to the Public Religion Research Institute. And multiple recent polls have found that a considerable majority of Americans believe advocacy for transgender rights has gone ‘too far’ (Peters, 2024).”

“I think our community, at least the T part, we moved very quickly from what I would call trans 101 to 201 to 301, and the public has never really caught up with us,” said Herley (TransNewYork). “And I think that's problematic for our community, and this is why you see all this pushback across the country.”⁶⁴

Indeed, a less confrontational and dismissive stance may attract and win new allies.

“I think that universally, the not-queer community and the average American, believe that it is wrong for someone to be persecuted or tortured because of their sexual orientation and gender identity,” said Morris (Immigration Equality). “I think regardless of their political beliefs, their religious beliefs, America does not want that to happen.”

“I try not to alienate any supporters who I find are reasonably aligned,” said Sjödin (OutRight International). “I really think it goes back to people not knowing anyone who is trans. I often use international examples like those in many of the places where we work, such as in India, where they accepted trans people before they accepted same-sex relations ... I believe you can't necessarily judge

⁶³ Advocates for Transgender Equality a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the rights, visibility, and well-being of transgender and gender-nonconforming people through advocacy, education, and policy reform (<https://transequality.org/>).

⁶⁴ Interview with G. Herley, July 10, 2025.

someone in just one conversation. I want to try to bring people in who can be supportive even if they don't yet support or understand the kind of work that we do.”⁶⁵

Burns believes that “we really need mass engagement at all levels of ages, economic resources, races, genders. And in order to do that, we need to make sure that we are a welcoming movement. We cannot police one another around language. We cannot make our own into enemies because they screw up pronouns. We've got to bring people along, make them feel welcome, invite them into a movement conversation ... Our enemies are out there. And one thing that our movement has always done, and the feminist movement has done this as well, is at moments we have aimed our guns at one another instead of outside. I think we have to figure out a way how not to do that and be to operate with integrity, but to also make sure that we are operating with kindness and grace with one another or else we're going to lose.”⁶⁶

Changing the narrative is also key. “The queer movement has been here before,” Morris pointed out. “When we were young, we were criminalized. We were deemed to be immoral. We were the equivalent of a pedophile to a lot of people. And we changed the narrative so much so—and, you know, it took 30 years or 50 or whatever it was—that we secured the right to marry in the Supreme Court. We went from being pariahs, legally demonized pariahs, to having some sense of equality. Now, obviously, the focus is on trans people. They are also part of the movement. They are also deserving. It's a much newer focus for the queer community. I have faith that both the queer community and the immigration rights community—if they have the right focus, the right leadership, and the right funding—can overcome this false narrative. We did it before. We can do it again.”⁶⁷

Mays argued that the best way to communicate is to tell our stories. “Gather and share stories about your existence, about your experience. I don't care whether it's a small group of 10 or you can get 10,000 people organized but start telling your stories. In every way, in every venue possible. And through those stories, find the places where there are commonalities. And where there are commonalities, those

⁶⁵ Interview with M. Sjödin, July 25, 2025.

⁶⁶ Interview with R. Burns, July 10, 2025.

⁶⁷ Interview with A. Morris, July 31, 2025

are the places that you organize and rally around. And it won't be everything all at once. But it'll be something and then be prepared. Be prepared to think of a world that is radically different from what we have all experienced.”⁶⁸

Hope. Across the board, organizational leaders remain hopeful. Clear-eyed, yes, but nonetheless hopeful. “I am very optimistic about the longer-term opportunity,” said Garcia (The American LGBTQ+ Museum). “It's just the number of people that are getting hurt in the short term and the immediate term is horrifying. I feel like what I'm seeing is the clarity. I think it's a very clarifying moment for all the queer orgs. And I feel like all of us are required to go back to like what's at the core of how we were founded.”⁶⁹

“I have to stay hopeful, I have to,” stressed Herrera (TransLatina Network). “I have to make sure that I am transmitting positivity, a sense of security, to my staff, to the clients that we serve ... Right now, we're looking for leaders within our communities. So, I know that I have a responsibility as one of those leaders to make sure that I give it the best I got. Portray strength within us, within our community ... Right now, we just need to get through the storm, and we need to be able to save ourselves to fight another day.”⁷⁰

“Do you feel hopeful for the future? Absolutely,” answered Smith (The Center) “Coming into the new fiscal year [July 1, 2025], we went through a lot. We did do what we had to do. But I've seen people lean in. Being in space with people and knowing that you get to see the impact of the work you do every day, and so to me, that gives you hope no matter what. This is a blip. It's a little longer than I would like it to be, but it's a blip ... I actually think we have the ability as a community to get back to where we were. It may take us a minute ... I don't believe in my core that this is who we are as a human race.”⁷¹

Hope lies in the next generation. “Despite all these difficulties, I'm a positive person,” said Herley (TransNewYork). “My experience of teaching at John Jay University and working with Gen Z have made

⁶⁸ Interview with O. Mays, July 7, 2025.

⁶⁹ Interview with B. Garcia, July 15, 2025.

⁷⁰ Interview with C. Herrera, July 31, 2025.

⁷¹ Interview with C. Smith, July 16, 2025.

me a little partial, but I think they're great. I think these kids, I just think they get it and they're not going to back down and they'll fight. They're smarter than we are.”⁷²

⁷² Interview with G. Herley, July 10, 2025.

Conclusion

The LGBTQ+ community and its nonprofits have been hit hard by the current administration's policies and rhetoric. Queer organizations have had to downsize, scramble for alternate funding, and strategize for an uncertain future, all in short order, all within the first half year of the Trump presidency. This paper is the start of the longer investigation that will witness how LGBTQ+ organizations survive the next few years. A deeper understanding and analysis of the history of the LGBTQ+ movement as well as the formation of and dynamics within the community's nonprofit infrastructure is called for. More importantly, the stories of the individuals impacted by the current political and social climate, along with those who serve through queer organizations must be told.

“When we fight, we win. We know the battle is far from over and there will be setbacks along the way, but the cause is too important, and the need too great, for us to lose heart.”⁷³

Jose Abrigo, Senior Attorney, Lambda Legal

⁷³ From a Lambda Legal announcement that the federal government has restored more than \$6.2 million in grant funding to nine organizations (Lambda Legal, 2025).

Methodology

Leaders of LGBTQ+ organizations were interviewed, either in person or via Zoom, from July through August 2025. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using Clio AI, a commercial AI tool for transcription. Interviews lasted from 30 to 60 minutes and focused on organizational activities. Quotes used were edited for clarity. Research questions include:

- How have your organization and your constituents been impacted by the Trump Administration mandates and policies?
- How has your organization responded to the current political and policy climate?
- What is your outlook for your organization's future? For the LGBTQ+ community and its organizations?

News articles and reports from various organizations were also gathered to provide additional data and context.

Interviewees [as of August 15, 2025]

Anonymous leader, youth organization
Michael Adams, Chief Executive Officer, SAGE
Richard Burns, Board Chair, The American LGBTQ+ Museum
Ben Garcia, Executive Director, The American LGBTQ+ Museum
Gennifer Herley, Founder & Executive Director, TransNewYork
Cristina Herrera, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, TransLatina Network
Cristina Jones, Chief People & Equity Officer, The Center
Jeffrey Klein, Chief Operating Officer, The Center
Odell Mays, Board Member, The American LGBTQ+ Museum
Aaron C. Morris, Executive Director, Immigration Equality
Bruce Packett, Executive Director, American Academy of HIV Medicine
Jesus Daniel Puerto, Founder, Love Wins NYC
Danté R.H. Reda, The LOFT LGBTQ+ Community Center
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