

# 2025 LEGISLATIVE REPORT



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Key Legislative Priorities.....	3
Session by the Numbers.....	4
Summary.....	5
Attacks on Fundamental Rights.....	6
Criminal Legal Reform	
Speech & Privacy	
LGBTQ+ Rights	
Hard-fought Victories.....	11
Speech & Privacy	
Voting Rights	
Criminal Legal Reform	
Reproductive Freedom	
LGBTQ+ Rights	
Looking Back and Ahead.....	21
In Action.....	22



# LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



## SPEECH & PRIVACY

Expand the right to privacy by increasing the control individuals have over their personal information, and championing the right to free expression and safe protest.



## VOTING RIGHTS

Protect the right to vote by preventing legislation that limits access to the ballot or places undue burdens on voters and election administrators.



## CRIMINAL LEGAL REFORM

Reduce the number of people incarcerated and under correctional control, and fight for their rights to privacy and healthcare.



## REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

Ensure that every person can make the best health care decisions for themselves and their family without undue political interference.



## LGBTQ+ RIGHTS

Ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, non-binary people, and others can live openly and authentically without discrimination, harassment, or violence.



## IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Ensure that fundamental constitutional protections apply to every person, regardless of immigration status.

# SESSION BY THE NUMBERS



- 5 Press conferences advocating for increased healthcare access and civil rights
- 6 Action alerts Sent
- 9 Capitol Observers
- 20 Testimonies delivered before legislative committees
- 23 New legal observers trained
- 69 Signatories on a letter for a Georgia Civil Rights Act
- 50 New volunteer signups
- 11 Volunteers trained to lobby at the Capitol
- 150 Hours of legal observation at the Capitol
- 636 Messages delivered to lawmakers
- 700 People mobilized at the Capitol for our Georgia Civil Rights Lobby Day and Sine Die Block Party
- 28k People participated in the Hands-Off Protest that we planned with coalition partners

# SUMMARY

**During the 2025 legislative session, the ACLU of Georgia fought relentlessly to enhance and defend the civil rights and civil liberties of all Georgians.**

**While the Georgia legislature targeted protestors, students, educators, voters, LGBTQ+ people, immigrants and more, our team was at the Capitol advocating for these communities.**

## **GEORGIA LEGISLATORS TOOK AIM AT OUR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS.**

- Georgia legislators failed to advance measures that would protect justice-impacted people.
- Georgia legislators passed bills that make it easier to discriminate while refusing to advance measures that include essential anti-discrimination protections.
- Georgia legislators passed bills that marginalize transgender and non-binary Georgians.

## **DESPITE SIZABLE CHALLENGES, WE WERE ABLE TO SECURE SOME INCREDIBLE WINS THIS SESSION, INCLUDING:**

- The defeat of bills restricting free speech and access to information.
- The defeat of bills that threaten the separation of church and state in education.
- The defeat of a bill that would have protected big tech companies at the expense of consumers' data privacy.
- The defeat of bills that increase barriers to voting, and the passage of bills that reduce them.
- The defeat of bills that expand criminalization and incarceration, and the passage of bills that reduce them.
- The defeat of legislation that would exacerbate housing instability at a time when homelessness is rising.
- The defeat of bills that endanger birthing people and the passage of legislation that codifies protections for people who want to start or grow their family.
- The passage of a resolution that will bring us one step closer to a comprehensive civil rights act in Georgia.
- The defeat of a bill that would have enabled additional discrimination against transgender and non-binary Georgians.

# ATTACKS ON FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS



# CRIMINAL LEGAL REFORM



**Georgia legislators failed to advance measures that would protect justice-impacted people.**

## "Georgia Booking Photo Privacy Protection Act" - HB 10

**Position:** Support

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Strengthens protections for people who have been arrested, but not convicted, by restricting the disclosure of arrest booking photographs. It would've also prohibited law enforcement from sharing booking photos with remove-for-pay companies if the individual has not been convicted, and made it easier for people to get their booking photos deleted from remove-for-pay websites if they were added.

**Action:** We testified in support of the bill when it was given a hearing in the House.

[\*\*Read our testimony\*\*](#) | [\*\*Read our one-pager\*\*](#)

**“**At the heart of our criminal justice system lies the presumption of innocence, which is enshrined in the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments. When an individual is arrested but not convicted, they remain legally innocent. However, the public dissemination of arrest booking photographs undermines this principle by subjecting individuals to societal judgment, professional consequences, and personal harm before they have had their day in court.

**”**

## Medical Marijuana Reform - SB 220

**Position:** Support

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Revises Georgia's medical cannabis laws by expanding the list of medical conditions eligible for treatment and increasing the permissible dosage of THC.

**Action:** We activated our network with an action alert, prompting supporters to send 59 emails to lawmakers supporting the bill.

## Reducing Barriers to Professional Licensure - SB 207

**Position:** Support

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Reduces barriers to professional licensure for firefighters with felony criminal records by providing clearer guidelines for licensing boards.



### **"Wrongful Conviction Compensation Act" - HB 533**

**Position:** Support

**Status:** Did Not Pass

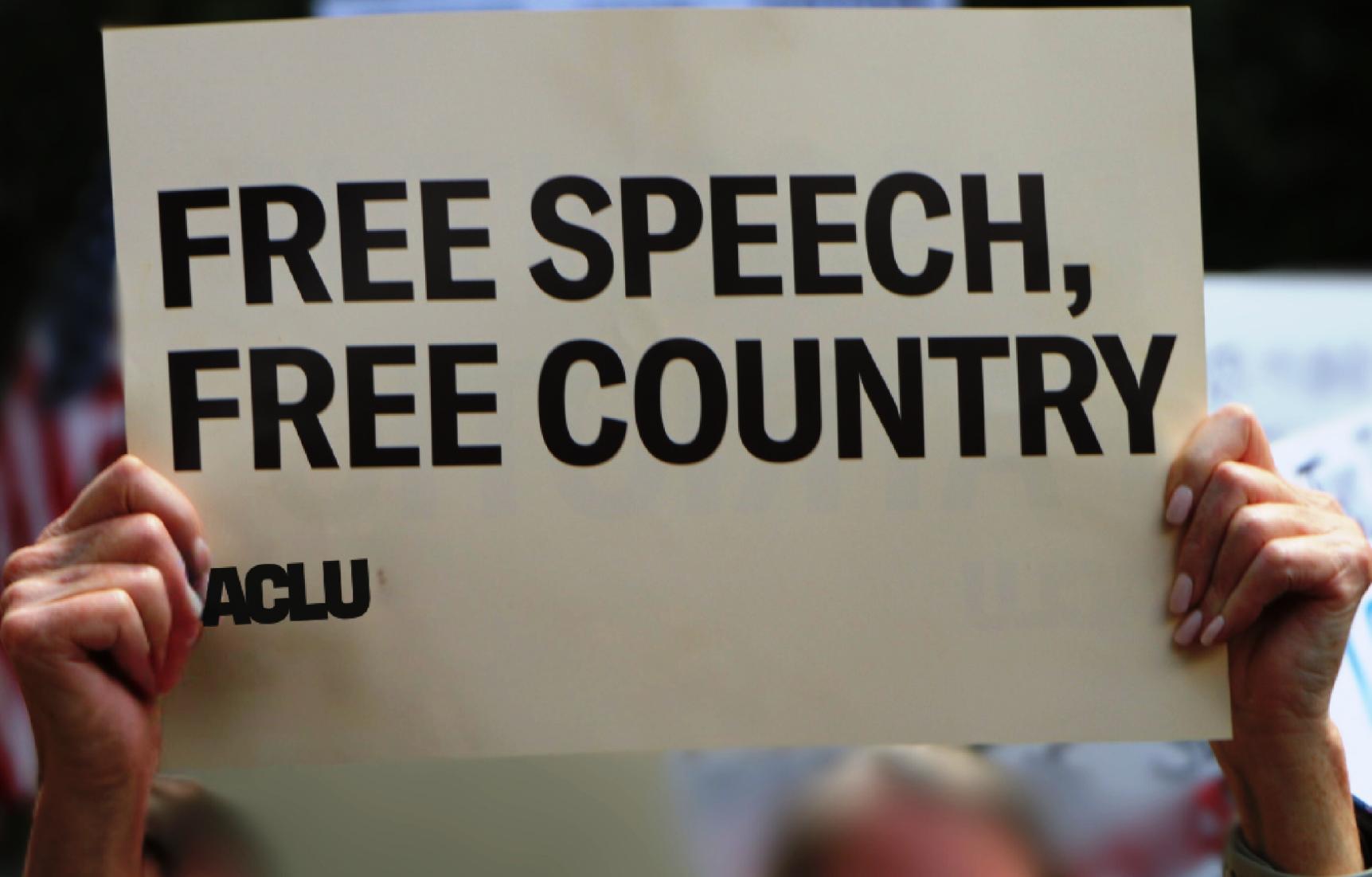
**Summary:** Establishes a legal process for individuals who were wrongfully convicted to seek compensation for their time incarcerated. Georgia is one of 12 states with no such law to help people rebuild their lives after years of incarceration.

### **Time Served Credits for Probationers- HB 535**

**Position:** Support

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Ensures that probationers receive credit for time served if they are confined due to a probation violation. The bill helps prevent excessive punishment for minor offenses by counting confinement periods toward the probation term.



# SPEECH & PRIVACY



**Georgia legislators passed bills that make it easier to discriminate while refusing to advance measures that include essential anti-discrimination protections.**

## "Religious Freedom Restoration Act" - SB 36

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Passed (Signed by Governor)

**Summary:** Prevents the government from substantially burdening religious freedom, thereby giving people the license to discriminate under the guise of religious expression.

**Action:** We testified in opposition to the bill when it was given hearings in the House and Senate. Furthermore, we sent an email action alert to our supporters in Rep. Matt Reeves' and Rep. Stan Gunter's districts, prompting four letters to them opposing the bill.

[Read our testimony](#) | [Read our one-pager](#)

*With a history that demonstrates how religion is often weaponized against minority communities, it seems to be a reasonable conclusion that SB 36 would provide a mechanism which exploits and perpetuates discrimination.*

## "Georgia Civil Rights Act of 2025" - HB 670 and SB 320

**Position:** Support

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Establishes a comprehensive state civil rights law to protect individuals from discrimination in housing, public accommodations, and employment.

**Action:** We sent a sign-on letter to the Governor and Lieutenant Governor urging them to support this legislation, with 9 organizational and 62 individual signatories.

[Read our sign-on letter](#)

## Prohibits Hair Discrimination- HB 135 and SB 225

**Position:** Support

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Prevents discrimination based on hair texture or style.



# LGBTQ+ RIGHTS

**Georgia legislators passed bills that marginalize transgender and non-binary Georgians.**

## Gender-Affirming Care in Prisons - [SB 185](#)

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Passed (Signed by Governor)

**Summary:** Prohibits the use of state funds for gender-affirming care in correctional institutions, barring incarcerated trans people from life-saving health care.

**Action:** We testified in opposition to the bill when it was given a hearing in the House.

**[Read our testimony](#)**

**“** *Federal as well as state courts are clear: state correctional facilities are required to provide individualized medical care to transgender people who are in their custody. Failing to provide payment for transgender inmates to access gender-affirming surgery, hormone therapy, and social transitioning procedures – as proposed in this bill – is categorically unconstitutional. Displaying a 'deliberate indifference' to a particular course of treatment for transgender people in custody constitutes cruel and unusual punishment.* **”**

## Trans Sports Ban - [SB 1](#)

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Passed (Signed by Governor)

**Summary:** Prohibits transgender students from participating in school sports teams that align with their gender identity. Schools must also designate separate changing rooms, restrooms and sleeping facilities for children based on their sex. Noncompliance with these regulations may result in the loss of state funding.



# HARD-FOUGHT VICTORIES



# SPEECH & PRIVACY



## The defeat of bills restricting free speech and access to information.

### **Bans DEI in Schools - HB 127**

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Prohibits public schools, universities and colleges from promoting, supporting or maintaining any programs or activities that advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion. This bill originally pertained to increasing the number of accumulated sick leave days for teachers. However, after SB 120 failed to cross over, the anti-DEI language from that bill was added to this one.

**Action:** We testified in opposition to the bill when it was given a hearing in the Senate and sent a report to the committee outlining our constitutional objections to the language. Further, we sent an action alert, prompting supporters to send 203 emails to lawmakers opposing the bill. Finally, we partnered with a coalition to send a sign-on letter to Senate leadership and hold a press conference to publicly oppose the bill.

[Read our testimony](#) | [Read our one-pager](#) | [Read our committee report](#)

*“ DEI does not create bias; it confronts the biases that have shaped this nation since its inception. This bill assumes that those biases no longer exist, and data in nearly every sector of life proves that bias — discrimination, even — is still alive and well.*

## The passage of a resolution that will bring us one step closer to a comprehensive civil rights act in Georgia.

### **Civil Rights Protections Study Committee- SR 444**

**Position:** Support

**Status:** Passed

**Summary:** Creates a committee to study, evaluate, and make policy recommendations for comprehensive civil rights protections in employment, housing, public accommodations, and public services.



### Criminalizes Librarians - HB 483

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Criminalizes librarians for failing to remove materials that could be considered “harmful to minors” from their libraries, threatening the constitutional right to free speech. This bill originally enhanced penalties for certain crimes when being enforced by a code inspector. However, after SB 74 stalled in committee, the librarian criminalization language from that bill was added to this one.

**Action:** We testified in opposition to the bill when it was given hearings in the House and Senate. Furthermore, we sent an email action alert prompting supporters to send 117 emails to lawmakers opposing the bill. Finally, we wrote about a librarian who had been negatively impacted by community members who opposed certain content in the library.

[Read our testimony](#) | [Read our one-pager](#) | [Read our impact story](#)

*[This bill] not only threatens the constitutional right of free speech, but also imposes undue criminal liability on librarians, creating a chilling effect that undermines the very purpose of libraries as centers of learning and exploration.*

### Library Standards for Minors - SB 248

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Establishes library standards for “inappropriate” materials for minors. The rise of book bans in recent years has barred children from accessing diverse materials, resources, and programming.





## Foreign-Supported Political Activity - SB 177

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Requires agents of hostile foreign principals and foreign-supported political organizations to register with the State Ethics Commission and comply with annual reporting requirements. This legislation creates the potential for selective enforcement, raising First Amendment concerns.

**Action:** We testified in opposition to the bill when it was given a hearing in the House.

[Read our testimony](#) | [Read our one-pager](#)

**“** *Without clear definitions, legitimate businesses, nonprofits, advocacy groups, and even individuals with international ties could be unfairly targeted. This lack of specificity grants excessive discretion to the government, increasing the risk of selective enforcement based on political motivations.* **”**

## Denies State Funds to Students - HB 602

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Denies state funds for loans, grants, and scholarships to any student who is convicted of a criminal offense or who violated their postsecondary educational institution's code of conduct. This effectively punishes students for engaging in protests, raising serious constitutional concerns related to free speech and due process.

**Action:** We testified in opposition to the bill when it was given a hearing in the House.

[Read our testimony](#)

**“** *HB 602 raises serious First Amendment concerns by penalizing students for engaging in protest. It is firmly settled that under our Constitution the public expression of ideas may not be prohibited merely because the ideas are offensive to some people.* **”**



## The defeat of bills that threaten the separation of church and state in education.

### Ten Commandments - HB 313

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Mandates the display of the Ten Commandments in numerous visible locations throughout public schools. This bill unconstitutionally endorses religion by promoting a religious text that not every student prescribes to.

### Credit for Religious Courses - HB 133

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Permits students to leave school and receive credit for attending courses in religious moral instruction. This bill unconstitutionally endorses religion by giving credit to students who would attend such courses.

## The defeat of a bill that would have protected big tech companies at the expense of consumers' data privacy.

### "Georgia Consumer Privacy Protection Act"- SB 111

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** While this bill intends to protect consumers against invasive data collection by regulating large corporations and data processors, its weak wording fails to guard against the most significant risks to consumers.

**Action:** We testified in opposition to the bill when it was given a hearing in the House and sent a report to the committee outlining our objections to the language.

[\*\*Read our testimony\*\*](#) | [\*\*Read our one-pager\*\*](#) | [\*\*Read our committee report\*\*](#)

*“Unfortunately, this bill mirrors weak legislation passed in other states —bills that create the illusion of privacy protection while riddled with loopholes. As written, SB 111 allows companies to continue their exploitative practices largely unchecked.*

# VOTING RIGHTS



**The defeat of bills that increase barriers to voting, and the passage of resolutions that reduce them.**

## **Election Omnibus - HB 397**

**Position:** **Oppose**

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Makes a number of changes to the election code, some that benefit Georgia voters, but most of which are harmful. The bill sought to restrict the Board from enacting new rules 60 days before an election and also sought to remove Georgia from multi state organizations that help clean voter rolls, give expanded duty and authority to the State Election Board, and ban counties' ability to accept hand-delivered absentee ballots the weekend before an election, among other items related to poll watchers, DropBox surveillance, and special elections.

**Action:** We testified in opposition of the bill when it was given a hearing in the House. We sent an email action alert prompting supporters to send 113 emails to lawmakers opposing the bill.

[\*\*Read our testimony\*\*](#)

“

*Voting should be easy for every citizen. We urge you to not pass anything that creates barriers for eligible voters.*

”

## **Election Omnibus - SB 175**

**Position:** **Oppose**

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Makes a number of changes to the election code, some that benefit Georgia voters, but most of which are harmful. While restricting the State Election Board from enacting new rules 60 days before an election and creating a process for the removal of State Election Board members are beneficial, the bill also sought to remove Georgia from multi state organizations that help clean voter rolls and banning counties' ability to accept hand-delivered absentee ballots the weekend before an election, among other items.



## Voting Equipment - SB 214

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Calls for a complete overhaul of Georgia's current voting system, replacing the ballot-marking devices with hand-marked paper ballots via optical scanners and ballot-on-demand printers.

**Action:** We testified twice in opposition to multiple versions of the bill when it was given hearings in the Senate.

[\*\*Read our testimony\*\*](#)

**“**...our election offices are already under significant financial constraints that we aren't addressing and this is leading them to have to make difficult decisions. Financial constraints on counties have a direct impact on voter access. I'd like for us to really think about the costs of our elections and how those costs are affecting voters and to be aware of financial implications when we are introducing legislation.

**”**

## Felony Disenfranchisement Study Committee - SR 429

**Position:** Support

**Status:** Passed

**Summary:** Creates a Senate study committee tasked with considering changes to Georgia's felony disenfranchisement law.

## Election Procedures Study Committee - HR 885

**Position:** Support

**Status:** Passed

**Summary:** Creates a House study committee tasked with updating and modernizing election procedures.





## The defeat of bills that expand criminalization and incarceration.

### Forced Jail Lease - SB 7

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Allows sheriffs to appropriate municipal detention facilities or jails to house individuals detained by their office. This bill was aimed at forcing the City of Atlanta to allow the Fulton County Sheriff's Office to have full and unrestricted use of the Atlanta City Detention Center (ACDC). While the bill sought to mitigate overcrowding in Fulton County Jail, it failed to address root causes of this crisis.

### Mandatory Minimum for “Violence” Against Police - SB 32

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Enforces a mandatory minimum sentence for individuals convicted of committing an act of violence while obstructing a law enforcement officer. The failure to define “violence” clearly would have led to inconsistent and unjust enforcement. Moreover, mandatory minimum sentences are ineffective at deterring crime and disproportionately impact people of color.

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## The defeat of a bill that would exacerbate housing instability at a time when homelessness is rising.

### “Georgia Anti-Squatting Act of 2025” - HB 61

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Allows landlords and innkeepers to vacate occupants of their property without due process, facilitating wrongful evictions. This bill originally pertained to fees for license plates but after SB 184 failed to crossover, the “anti-squatting” language was added to this bill.

[Read our one-pager](#)

# REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM



**The defeat of bills that endanger birthing people and the passage of legislation that codifies protections for people who want to start or grow their family.**

## Establishes Life at Conception - HB 441

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Criminalizes abortion from the point of conception. Criminal penalties would apply to people who receive abortion care as well as the physicians, medical professionals, and other individuals who help someone receive abortion care.

**Action:** We testified in opposition to the bill when it was given a hearing in the House.

[\*\*Read our testimony\*\*](#)

**“** Georgia tops the list of having the highest maternal mortality rates in the country, particularly among Black women, and HB 441 would exacerbate this crisis. It's interesting, actually, I've testified in support of bills that would've significantly improved maternal health in Georgia, saving babies and mothers, yet those committees had a fraction of the attendance of the one today. If we're going to support life, let's actually support life. Cherry-picking the stage of development that we believe deserves protection isn't real protection. **”**

## Establishes Life at Conception- HB 122

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Bans abortion from the point of conception.

## Right to IVF - HB 428

**Position:** Support

**Status:** Passed (Signed by Governor)

**Summary:** Clarifies that nothing in the Georgia code will preclude access to in vitro fertilization (IVF).



## The defeat of a bill that would have enabled additional discrimination against transgender and non-binary Georgians.

### **"Riley Gaines Act" - HB 267**

**Position:** Oppose

**Status:** Did Not Pass

**Summary:** Bans transgender students from participating in sports with their peers and requires separate restrooms, changing areas, and sleeping arrangements based on biological sex. It also includes a provision that would fine school staff who violate these rules. Replaces "gender" with "sex" throughout the Georgia code, enabling discrimination against trans and non-binary Georgians in employment, health care, public services, and more.

**Action:** We testified in opposition to the bill when it was given a hearing in the Senate.

[Read our testimony](#) | [Read our one-pager](#)

**“**HB 267 ultimately excludes trans, intersex, and non-binary people from receiving state services and protections. That is the exact opposite of what this body is here to do, and is an unfathomable affront to the rights of trans, intersex, and non-binary Georgians. **”**



# LOOKING BACK AND AHEAD

A heartfelt thank you to those who engaged in the fight for your rights and the rights of those you care about during this legislative session.

While the 2025 session has ended, the fight to protect and expand our rights is far from over. Staying engaged year-round is crucial as we prepare for the challenges ahead. Lawmakers listen to their constituents, so maintaining regular communication with your elected officials is essential.

## LET'S KEEP UP THE FIGHT.



