

Statement from Gina Duncan, the director of transgender equality for Equality Florida:

Many say that this is the most important election of our lifetime and that we need to vote like our lives depend on it. For the transgender community, that is alarmingly, literally true.

The choices for President this year are a stark contrast of inclusion versus othering, of tolerance versus demonization, of equality versus erasure. The outcome of the 2020 election is a referendum on transgender rights and protections. For the trans community, we have already endured four years of blatant discrimination, assaults on basic trans rights, and the gaslighting of transphobia across our nation. The Trump administration has attacked the transgender community from every aspect of daily life: The rollback of Title IX school guidance, of trans related healthcare and insurance protections, of homeless shelter rights and protections, to the Transgender Military Ban.

The Trump administration's obsession with erasing the transgender community has gaslit anti-transgender legislation at the state level and has encouraged violence against an already vulnerable segment of our society. Last year, Florida's legislature introduced eight anti-LGBTQ+ bills including a bill that would make it a felony for doctors and therapists to provide gender affirming care for transgender and nonbinary youth. Fortunately, due to grassroots opposition, all bills in the "Hate Slate" were defeated in committee.

In 2018, Florida was the epicenter of anti-transgender violence, leading the nation in anti-trans murders with 5 black transgender women having been brutally murdered. In each case the victims were misgendered by law enforcement and the media, the cases were not deemed to be hate crimes and few have been solved. Violence against transgender Americans continues to this day with 34 anti-transgender murders being committed so far in 2020.

Joe Biden and Kamala Harris have pledged to fight for the transgender community. They propose a strong agenda including passing the Equality Act and addressing the issues that face transgender Americans, saying, "There should be zero discrimination," and that "Transgender equality is the civil rights issue of our time." We agree.

As a community, we are exhausted, but we have fought too hard to retreat into the shadows. We will not be erased, we will not be intimidated and we will not tolerate Trump's assault on our rights and protections any longer. Transgender rights are on the ballot. Being treated with dignity and respect is on the ballot. The ability to live an authentic life, love who you want to love, hold a good job, raise a family, and carve out our own vision of the American Dream is on the ballot.

We must vote like our lives depend on it. Because for transgender Americans, it does.