

Welcome to the Family Speak Out Program!

Thank you for raising your voice and sharing your story! We know there are millions of people with LGBTQ+ parents in the United States – that means millions of parents, grandparents, youth, and adults. Your story, experiences, and voice matter in the movement for LGBTQ+ rights, social justice, economic justice, and racial justice.

Family Equality Council is dedicated to advancing the legal and lived equality for all LGBTQ+ families and those who wish to form them. By speaking out, you are breaking down barriers of isolation, changing hearts and minds, and driving policy change.

As Director of Family Engagement, I have the privilege of regularly hearing from LGBTQ+ families. My own speak out journey began at a young age, from telling teachers about my LGBTQ+ family to speaking on radio programs about marriage equality. Speaking out is empowering, challenging, and often intimidating.

By joining Family Equality Council's Speak Out Program, you are now part of a community of advocates and activists who come from different backgrounds and levels of experience. Everyone has an important story to tell and perspective to share about LGBTQ+ families, and by sharing the joys and the challenges of our families you can help build a better future.

This toolkit will provide information, tips, best practices, and some of what you can expect from speaking out in various ways, settings, and venues. It is a starting point which will be built upon with further periodic trainings and additional resources.

Thank you for being part of our Speak Out Program and lending your voice to the cause! We look forward to supporting you and helping to raise your voice with resources and new platforms.

In solidarity,
Emily McGranachan
Director of Family Engagement

Family Equality Council & Family Speak Out 101

Mission Statement:

Family Equality Council's mission is to advance legal and lived equality for LGBTQ+ families, and for those who wish to form them, through building community, changing hearts and minds, and driving policy change.

Vision Statement:

We envision a future where all LGBTQ+ families, regardless of creation or composition, live in communities that recognize, respect, protect, and value them.

We envision a world in which every LGBTQ+ person has the right and the opportunity to form and sustain a loving family, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion, national origin, geography, socioeconomic status, disability, or the intersection of those characteristics.

Finally, we envision systems of service and support that are free of discrimination and that maximize opportunities for LGBTQ+ youth needing permanency and LGBTQ+ adults seeking family formation through adoption, foster care, assisted reproductive technology or other means.

WHY SPEAKING OUT MATTERS

Our stories, ideas, and experiences can and do directly impact our legal and lived equality. Together, we push back against discrimination, stereotypes, and barriers to our equality.

Together, we are able to lift up the beauty and complexity of LGBTQ+ families and by doing so, we build our community and bring others into the movement. Your story makes a difference.



Family Equality Council & Family Speak Out 101

FAMILY EQUALITY COUNCIL'S SPEAK OUT PROGRAMS

OUTSPOKEN GENERATION

People who have one or more LGBTQ+ parents or caregivers have been outspoken advocates for themselves, their families, and social justice for decades. Today, people with one or more LGBTQ+ parents/caregivers are telling their own truth and changing the national dialogue about the joys and challenges of our families. More than ever, the intersectionality of identities found in the voices of people with LGBTQ+ parents is needed to combat discrimination and decrease isolation in our communities. Outspoken Generation members are individuals over the age of 9 who have one or more LGBTQ+ parent or caregiver.

PARENT VOICES

Parents, guardians, and caregivers speak out in defense of their families everywhere from the doctor's office to the PTA, from the soccer field to the state house. LGBTQ+ parents have important stories, experiences, and skills that will be amplified to reach not only politicians and media outlets, but also fellow members of the community to break down barriers of isolation.

PEARLS OF WISDOM

This program is designed to empower grandparents and elders in the LGBTQ+ community to share their experiences with others. Grandparents, both those who are allies and advocates for their LGBTQ+ children and grandchildren, as well as those who identify as LGBTQ+ themselves, have very important voices that can touch and connect across generations. Grandparents, future grandparents, and elders in our families are also critical voices to help reach across the table in a more often unsupportive generation.

LGBTQ+ FOSTER ALUMNI LEADERSHIP AND ACTION TEAMS

These teams, which are launching in 2019, will provide an opportunity for foster care alumni who are LGBTQ+, who have LGBTQ+ parents, or who are allies to improve care for the foster youth following in their footsteps by sharing stories, developing model policies, speaking to the media, and testifying at hearings. The teams are a partnership of Family Equality Council, Foster Club, and the Every Child Deserves a Family Campaign.

Talking Points

WHY WE SPEAK OUT

• **Non-Discrimination Protections** – In many states, there are no express nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ people. For this reason, LGBTQ+ people are still highly susceptible to facing discrimination in many arenas of daily life, including children and family services, employment, housing, access to accommodations, and more

• **Religious Refusal Bills** – There are bills on the state and federal levels that, if enacted, would allow religion to be used as a license to discriminate against LGBTQ+ people. There are now laws in ten states that explicitly allow foster care and adoption agencies to refuse to place children with qualified LGBTQ+ parents - as well as single parents, parents of minority faiths, and others - denying forever families for tens of thousands of foster youth in these states who are waiting to be adopted. Some of these laws also allow discrimination against LGBTQ+ children and youth. We expect that more of these religious refusal bills will be introduced in additional states in coming years.

▶ Ten states (AL, TX, MS, ND, SD, VA, MI, OK, KS & SC) have passed bills allowing adoption and foster care agencies to discriminate against LGBTQ+ children, youth, and qualified parents

– as well as other prospective parents who don't pass an agency's religious test.

• **Transgender Rights** – One primary effort that opponents of equality have developed is to attempt to deny transgender people the ability to fully participate in daily life by:

- Prohibiting transgender people from using the restroom that matches their gender identity.
- Reducing or eliminating access to proper identity documents which correctly reflect their gender.
- Prohibiting transgender youth from full participation in school, based upon their gender.
- Preventing access to necessary health care.
- Prohibiting local jurisdictions (cities, counties, parishes) from enacting ordinances that prohibit discrimination against transgender people.
- Even creating policies that claim that transgender children and people don't exist.

▶ As of now, there are 31 states that allow discrimination against transgender people in employment housing, and public accommodation. 24 states do not protect transgender foster youth from discrimination.

Talking Points

WHAT WE KNOW

► **We are many.** According to a recent UCLA study, in 2016 there were over 700,000 same-sex couples living together, which included over 114,000 couples raising children.

- Of those same-sex couples raising children, 75% were female couples and 25% were male.
- According to the 2015 National Center for Transgender Equality U.S. Transgender Survey, 18% of respondents were parents.

► **We're doing fine.** Almost 40 years of scientific research overwhelmingly confirms that children raised in LGBTQ+-headed households have the same advantages and same expectations for health, social and psychological adjustment, and development as children whose parents are heterosexual.

► **Open doors and open hearts.** Research from UCLA show that same-sex couples are seven times more likely to foster and adopt than different-sex couples. LGBTQ+ people are also more likely to adopt older children and children with disabilities – children who have the most difficulty finding forever homes.

► **LGBTQ+ youth in care need affirming homes.** Allowing discrimination in the child welfare system is not in the best interest of children.

- Over 20% of foster youth over the age of 12 identify as LGBTQ+, and they report twice the rate of poor treatment in foster care, and greater rates of placement in group homes, multiple placements, hospitalization for emotional reasons, and involvement in the criminal justice system than their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts.
- Over 60% of LGBTQ+ homeless youth were in foster care prior to becoming homeless. Improving foster care will help end homelessness.

► **We're facing barriers to equality.** Children raised by same-sex couples experience poverty and food insecurity at a much higher rate than those of heterosexual married couples. These socioeconomic and health barriers stem in part from a lack of legal protections and access to needed human services. Sexism, wage discrimination, and racial discrimination also all play a role.



Talking Points

GLOSSARY OF COMMONLY USED TERMS WITHIN THE LGBTQ+ FAMILY COMMUNITY

Adoption: The creation, by a court, of legally established parental rights and responsibilities between a child and an adult or adult couple.

ART (Assisted Reproductive Technologies): Any treatment or procedure that involves surgically removing eggs from the ovaries and combining the eggs with sperm to help achieve pregnancy. Intrauterine insemination (IUI) is sometimes also considered an ART procedure, even though it does not involve manipulation of eggs.

Child Welfare System: Refers to the public and private services by the government that focus on ensuring that all children live in safe and permanent homes. This often relates to the foster care system, "...a temporary arrangement in which adults provide for the care of a child or children whose birth parent is unable to care for them" (National Adoption Center). Foster care and adoption from foster care is a government function, as the children are in the custody of the state government once removed from birth parents and until reunification or a legal adoption.

Donor: A person who donates sperm or egg to help another person become pregnant.

Donor Insemination: The process through which donated sperm is placed inside a vagina or uterus with the intention of achieving pregnancy. The term is preferred in the LGBTQ+ community over 'artificial insemination' as it does not imply there is something 'artificial' about this method of conception.

Donor Siblings/Diblings: People who are biologically related to one another by having the same sperm or egg donor.

Gestational Carrier or Gestational Surrogate: A person with a uterus who carries a pregnancy for an intended parent or parents and who has no genetic link to the baby or babies born as a result of the pregnancy.

LGBTQ+: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and other identities.

License to Discriminate: The term commonly used for laws that discriminate against the LGBTQ+ community. 'License to Discriminate' laws claim to uphold religious freedom, but really they seek to allow citizens, businesses, government agencies and their employees and government contractors to deny services to anyone in the name of a personally held religious or 'moral' belief. These laws are a license to discriminate.

Queerspawn/Gayby/Queer 2.0: A person with one or more LGBTQ+ parent or caregiver. There are many different terms people use for themselves.

Second Generation: A person who is LGBTQ+ and has at least one LGBTQ+ parent or caregiver.

Story Sharing Worksheet



and through him now have met five other donor-siblings, all of whom also have lesbian moms and grew up in Massachusetts.)

Step 2 – Cut the story down to one paragraph and write it out. Time yourself for 3 minutes

(Example: *I have lesbian moms and grew up as an only-child in Massachusetts. When I turned eighteen I contacted my sperm donor. Through him, I now have met five of my donor-siblings and their families. I went from an only-child in a small family to being part of a big, queer, loving family.*)

Step 3 – Cut the story down to a tweet (280 characters). Time yourself for 1 minute.

(Example: *After growing up isolated from other youth with LGBTQ+ parents, I contacted my sperm donor at 18. Now I have a big, beautiful, queer family of donor-siblings and lots of lesbian moms.*)

Reflection – Which version did you like the best and how did your story change each time you wrote it down? When you think of telling your story to a wider audience, how do you want them to remember it?

Step 1 – Write two to three paragraphs about your LGBTQ+ family or personal story. Time yourself for 5 minutes.

(Example: *I grew up as an only child in Massachusetts with lesbian moms. I didn't meet anyone else with LGBTQ+ parents until I was thirteen. When I was born, my bio mom was with who partner who was a parent to me. When I was four they separated and a few years later my bio mom met someone else who was another parent. She second-parent adopted me when I was eleven to make it official. I was conceived with an unknown sperm donor at a local clinic.*

When I turned eighteen, I began the process to contact my donor. I met him a few months later

Messaging and Framing the Conversation

TIPS FOR FRAMING THE CONVERSATION

Frame: To arrange or adjust for a purpose.

A frame gives meaning to an issue, an idea or even a word. Controlling the frame becomes especially important when working to communicate accurately about the reality of our LGBTQ+ families.

**KEY FRAMES FOR CONVERSATIONS
ABOUT LGBTQ+ FAMILIES:**

- ▶ LGBTQ+ families want respect, safety, dignity, recognition, and to be valued – just like all other families.
- ▶ Today, there is no one way families are formed. Only 1 in 4 families fits the typical definition of “all American family”. All children, parents and caregivers deserve equal protection and recognition.

- ▶ When it comes to foster care and adoption, every child deserves a stable, loving, forever family, and parents and potential parents deserve protections from discrimination. ‘License to Discriminate’ adoption and foster care laws harm children, youth and parents receiving child welfare services, especially those who are LGBTQ+, nonreligious or of minority faith, or otherwise marginalized.

- ▶ According to the 2015 GLSEN National School Climate survey, LGBTQ+ youth and those with LGBTQ+ parents face high rates of discrimination and bullying in school. Schools should be a safe place for learning for everyone. Everyone should be safe and welcomed at school by peers, teachers, staff, and administrators.

Messaging & Framing the Conversation

Message: The basic thesis or lesson; the subject of communication. Think of it as the point or points conveyed.

It is important to choose a frame and be on message to ensure you:

- Have a clear train of thought
- Present a concise explanation (Keep It Short and Simple)
- Remain consistent
- Use a convincing argument

Clear Train of Thought: It is normal to become flustered or to veer off topic when talking to a large group of people, especially when the subject matter is of great importance to you. Often examples and points you want to make come to you spontaneously and you want to share them all. The challenge is to stay focused. Resist the urge to 'wing it' entirely. Off the cuff can be fun, but when discussing equality for our families, think through your examples and experiences ahead of time.

Pick the examples ahead of time which best exemplify your point, and work to stay on course.

Concise Explanation: Keep it short and simple to stay on topic and to avoid confusion.

Remain Consistent: It is okay to repeat yourself! You are conveying your message consistently. This helps people remember your key message.

Staying on Message: You can stay on message by steering conversations back to your key message. This can be done by drawing connections or comparisons back to the original point. Staying on message includes being consistent in language, tone, and the statement about your overall goals. Sharing stories is great! Your story is important and you should feel free to embellish a bit to help people get to know your family. Keep in mind, that it is your job to bring conversations back around to your agenda and key messages.

Convincing Argument: The formula to a good argument is **Problem + Measurable Solution + Specific Call-To-Action**

Example: LGBTQ+ FAMILY RIGHTS

Problem: 'License to Discriminate' bills allow foster care and adoption agencies to turn away qualified LGBTQ+ parents limiting the pool of prospective families for all youth in out-of-home care, and negatively impacting the LGBTQ+ foster youth who deserve affirming, safe, and supportive care.

Solution: Congress must pass the Every Child Deserves a Family Act.

Call-To-Action: Call or email your representatives today! Visit www.familyequality.org/everychild to take immediate action and join the campaign.

Messaging and Framing the Conversation

TIPS FOR STRONG LANGUAGE

Using skills and strategies to effectively, strategically, and repeatedly tell your story is vital to the LGBTQ+ family movement!

- ▶ **Who?** Know your audience and tailor your message to that audience.
- ▶ **What?** Tell your truth, your story. For example, policymakers are much more influenced by individual stories and viewpoints than by identical mass emails.
- ▶ **When?** Whenever you have an audience – even if it is only one person. Grassroots change happens one person at a time.
- ▶ **Where?** Wherever you have an audience.
- ▶ **Why?** Intentional messaging is more effective and persuasive.
- ▶ **How?** Be intentional, plan, have vision – think: How does what I’m saying fit into the bigger picture of equality and justice?

EXAMPLES OF STRONG LANGUAGE AND MESSAGING

- **We demand equality.**
- **Celebration of diversity is critical.**
- **Justice will win.**
- **Dignity and justice for our families is vital.**
- **Justice and equality are urgent.**
- **The LGBTQ+ family movement is vital.**
- **I am fighting for freedom and equality for my family.**
- **Every child deserves a permanent, loving home and family.**
- **Stand up for equality.**
- **Will you cosponsor and vote for the Every Child Deserves a Family Act/ Equality Act/other legislation?**
- **Will you vote no on discriminatory legislation?**

Sample Challenging Question

Below you will find questions and potential answers. Before you speak publicly, it is a good idea to review these potential questions and answers, especially if you anticipate a mixed or hostile audience. It can be jarring and emotionally challenging to hear questions like this, so it's best to prepare clear, positive messages in advance.

Q: My faith tells me that homosexuality is a sin.

A: Not all theologians agree with the premise that [Christianity, Judaism, etc.] says homosexuality is wrong. We aren't here to judge other people. I hope that instead of turning us away, you would welcome LGBTQ+ families.

Q: How can you be LGBTQ+ and a person of faith at the same time?

A: Being LGBTQ+ doesn't impact a person's ability to be spiritual any more than being heterosexual or cisgender does. Many LGBTQ+ people are people of faith and active in their faith communities

Q: There's marriage equality now, so shouldn't religious beliefs be protected by law with 'religious liberty bills'?

A: Freedom of religion is already protected under the First Amendment of the Constitution. That is not at risk. What these laws really do is permit discrimination. They allow businesses and government agencies and workers to deny services based on an individual's or agency's

religious litmus test. If a business is open to the public, or a foster care agency receives taxpayer funds to serve the public money, it must serve everyone. Protecting religious freedom does not extend to imposing religious beliefs on others, and especially does not allow harming or discriminating against others based on your religious beliefs. In fact, to protect religious freedom for all people we must make sure that taxpayer-funded agencies do not place a religious test on the services they provide or the people they serve; people of minority faiths are often among those impacted by foster care and adoption license to discriminate bills.

Q: Aren't children raised by LGBTQ+ parents more likely to be LGBTQ+ themselves?

A: All of the available evidence demonstrates that the sexual orientation of parents has no impact on the sexual orientation of their children, and that children of LGBTQ+ parents are no more or less likely than any other child to grow up to identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. There is evidence that children of LGBTQ+ parents are more tolerant of diversity, but that's certainly a good thing. Of course, some people with LGBTQ+ parents are also LGBTQ+. They have the advantage of being raised by parents who are far more likely to be supportive and accepting in a world that can sometimes be hostile. Laws and policies that allow discrimination against LGBTQ+

Sample Challenging Question

parents have no foundation in social science, and are opposed by all major medical and child welfare organizations.

Q: Aren't children better off with a mother and a father?

A: All children deserve a safe, loving, and permanent home. There are now decades worth of research that show children with same-sex parents grow up just as healthy and well-adjusted as children with different-sex parents. Most important to children is the love, support, and respect they get from one or more adults who care for them.

Q: Wouldn't it be better if children were not out about their families or their own LGBTQ+ identities at school?

A: All children deserve to be treated with respect and to have a safe learning environment. They deserve to be in an environment where they do not have to hide or lie about who they are and who their families are. Bullying should never be tolerated by school staff, peers, or parents.

Q: Why do children and young adults need to be out about their sexual orientation or gender identity at school?

A: Title IX is a federal law that makes sex discrimination illegal in most schools. That

includes discrimination against someone because they are transgender or don't adhere to traditional gender expectations. According to the law, students have the right to be treated with respect and dignity – this includes having your pronouns, name, and gender accepted by the school without the need to provide legal documents to confirm identity. Students also have the right to use restrooms and locker rooms that match their gender identity. All students deserve to be treated with respect, to be able to safely share their sexual orientation or gender identity, and to have their identities recognized by the school.

Q: Is it really appropriate to talk about sexual orientation and gender identity in school? To teach about it?

A: There are age appropriate ways to talk about sexual orientation, gender identity, and intimacy. The purpose of sex education is to teach children medically accurate information about their bodies and potential outcomes of certain actions on their bodies, and it should include information relevant to LGBTQ+ children's health and well-being. We should strive to ensure that children and young adults receive the most comprehensive, accurate information available, so they can be best informed to make decisions.

Sample Challenging Question

COMMON QUESTIONS FROM FRIENDLY AUDIENCE/MEDIA

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

You may only ever get asked a portion of these questions, but if you prepare for all of them, your confidence will be higher, your messaging will be better, and your overall preparedness will be greater.

Keep in mind that while being interviewed, you could be asked any number of questions. Do not answer questions if you do not know the answer. You can simply say, *"That question is not about my family, so I cannot answer it."* You may also get asked a question you are not comfortable answering. In that case, you can say, *"I prefer not to answer that."* or *"That isn't relevant."*

- ▶ How was your family formed? And how did you decide to form your family the way you did?
- ▶ If you're out about your family at school/work, how do people react?
- ▶ What's the most challenging thing about being part of an LGBTQ family?
- ▶ What's the best thing about being part of an LGBTQ family?
- ▶ Is your extended family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) accepting of your family?

- ▶ Do you/your (grand)children have role models of different genders?
- ▶ Are you/is your (grand)child also LGBTQ? *[Note – this may be phrased in a different way, but is a common question, so be prepared]*
- ▶ Are you/your parents/your children married?
- ▶ When did you know you were LGBTQ/did your parent come out to you? When did you know you/your parent was transgender?
- ▶ Have you/your children ever been bullied or harassed for having LGBTQ parents?



Practical Tips for Speaking Out - Public Speaking

PUBLIC SPEAKING DOS & DON'TS

DO

- ✓ Make eye contact with the interviewer or by looking out and scanning an audience.
- ✓ Speak slowly and clearly.
- ✓ Keep the mic about chin level.
- ✓ Practice in the mirror. You will be able to check for potentially distracting mannerisms.
- ✓ Practice speaking so you can identify your own fall back, filler words (um, like, uh...) and work to eliminate them from your speech.
- ✓ If you have a set amount of time to speak, practice by timing yourself so you don't run over. You want to use your time wisely so you can deliver your message.
- ✓ Stay on message. You may feel like you're a broken record, but remember, the more often people hear a single message, the more likely they are to remember it, and then be able to repeat it.
- ✓ Take notes when being asked questions to have something to refer back to while you answer.
- ✓ Have fun!

DON'T

- ✗ Don't pace or shift your stance. It is distracting for the audience.
- ✗ Don't fight with audience members. The person who stays composed and on message will appear in control.
- ✗ Don't take things personally. When speaking out, you represent a larger group, so adversaries don't know you personally. It isn't about you personally, though it may feel that way.
- ✗ Don't use filler words like 'um', 'uh', 'like', or 'yeah'. If you catch yourself using these words, record yourself to assess the habit. You may want to try writing out your talking points so you don't find yourself searching for words. You can also slow down and breath to help gather your thoughts without using filler words.



Practical Tips for Speaking Out - Media

Media: Speak Out members may be connected with media inquiries for interviews, invited to write articles for publications or websites, or asked to be a guest on a radio show or podcast.

MEDIA 101

- Be yourself.
- Be positive.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Keep a sense of humor.
- Tell your story and use anecdotes.
- Correct rumors and misinformation.
- Anticipate negative questions and prepare responses.
- You don't have to answer anything you don't want to.
- Anything you say is on the record and can be used against you, so be intentional.
- Never lie.
- Stick to your message, and keep that message simple.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW EXPERIENCE ON CAMERA

WHAT TO EXPECT

Chances are if someone has asked you for an interview, they have a genuine desire to learn more about you, your family, and your fight for equality.

WHAT TO WEAR

Being on camera can be a particularly important time to make a good impression. Cameras pick up certain colors and patterns better than others; in order to put your best foot forward, below is a broad list of what to bring and what to avoid when being filmed on camera.

DOS

- Wear solid colored clothes in dark or neutral colors.
- Clothes made of natural fabrics tend to breathe easily and will be more comfortable under warm studio lights.
- Wear comfortable shoes, especially if you are going to be standing for long periods.
- Style your hair off your face to avoid shadows.

DON'TS

- To best catch the light, avoid stark white, bright yellow and red shirts, and black suits, which tend to absorb too much light.
- Avoid shirts with pinstripes or complicated patterns because they tend to be distracting on camera.
- Avoid large and shiny jewelry that may sparkle and reflect light back on the camera.

Practical Tips for Speaking Out - Media

RADIO & PODCASTS



DO

- ✓ Take short notes when being asked questions and write things down in your own short hand on a piece of paper so that you don't miss any part of a question or forget your main point.
- ✓ Find out ahead of time who, if anyone, will be on the air or recording with you.
- ✓ Find out ahead of time how long you will be on the air or recording.
- ✓ Address the audience as if it is one person, not a group of people (ex. *'thank you for listening,'* instead of *'thanks to everyone who's listening'*).

DON'T

- ✗ Don't talk over someone so your audio remains clear.
- ✗ Don't assume the host will cover all of the relevant parts of your story. Be prepared to share anything not covered that you want to bring up.

Practical Tips for Speaking Out - Writing

FIVE STEPS TO WRITING AN EFFECTIVE LETTER/BLOG POST

1. Be brief. For a letter in a newspaper, keep to 150 – 250 words. For an op-ed piece in a newspaper, 500 words. For an online blog post, between 300 – 500 words.

2. Use language that is easy to understand. Make your arguments clear and concise so they have more impact.

3. Avoid personal attacks. Don't make comments that could be considered rude or threatening.

4. Effective letters to the editor are made up of three paragraphs, each with a specific purpose and content:

a. **Paragraph 1: *The Proposition*** – Say what caused you to write in (concern about, or thanks for a specific article, column, or editorial; lack of LGBTQ+ inclusion in news coverage, anti-LGBTQ+ editorial, etc.). Important note: Be sure not to repeat negative or damaging information.

b. **Paragraph 2: *The Argument*** – Say what you think and why people should care. Be concise and make your point clearly. Use brief, personal stories when appropriate.

c. **Paragraph 3: *The Call to Action/Conclusion*** – Say what should be done to correct the publication's/author's representation of LGBTQ+ people or policies; and wrap up with a smart, punchy conclusion that ties your argument back to your proposition.

5. Write Immediately! For newspapers, responses to an article usually need to be received the same day the article runs. For magazines, letters should be submitted the same week the issue appears. It's best to use email to send your letter. Be sure to let Family Equality Council know so we can share any digital versions once published.

Practical Tips for Speaking Out - Panels



- 1.** Know who the other panelists are ahead of time.
- 2.** Confirm the location, time, and date.
- 3.** Have the contact information for the organizer or moderator on-hand in case you need help finding the location or you are running late.
- 4.** Arrive at least 30 minutes before the panel is to start.
- 5.** Have water with you.
- 6.** Most panels will have a particular focus, theme, or topic. Make note cards or a list of stories, messages, talking points, and key things you want to mention throughout the conversation.
- 7.** If the moderator provides the questions in advance, look at them and create a rough outline of how you'd like to answer.
- 8.** Make eye contact with the audience, speak slowly, breathe, and have fun!

Practical Tips for Speaking Out - Educating Elected Officials

Educating your elected officials about your family, yourself, and issues that impact you is a powerful way to build allies and champions for equality, and to convince our opponents to stop attacks on our families. Educating policymakers helps you build a relationship with an official and their staff that helps them see equality is an important priority for their community.

Activists who contact or meet with elected officials and other policymakers make an important contributions to our movement for equality. If you represent a group that is prohibited from lobbying, educating policymakers does not constitute lobbying unless you discuss specific legislation.

Telling elected officials your or your family's story and explaining why equality is important to you is not lobbying if you do not refer to specific legislation.



Ashley Chiappano of New Jersey tells U.S. Rep. Josh Gottheimer her family's story and why LGBTQ equality is so important for kids.