



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Welcoming Participants in Empire State Pride Agenda's Equality and Justice Day

BRAD HOYLMAN April 30, 2013

On April 30, 2013, Empire State Pride Agenda, New York's statewide lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender civil rights and advocacy organization, held its Equality and Justice Day in Albany. This annual event, which features a rally at the Capitol, workshops, caucuses and visits with elected representatives, is an opportunity for the LGBT community to show its strength and depth of support. Following is a transcript of welcoming remarks I made to the event's participants.

Good morning.

It is such an honor to be here to address you today and it is good to see so many friends in the community.

And let me tell you, as the only openly gay member of the State Senate, it's nice to have some company up here in Albany!

I sincerely want to thank the Pride Agenda and all of you – you are doing such important work.

It reminds me of what Martina Navratilova said about the NBA player Jason Collins who came out yesterday.

She wrote: "It's only when you come out that you can be exactly who you are. Collins' action will save lives. This is no exaggeration: Fully one third of suicides among teenagers occur because of their sexuality. Collins will truly affect lives, too. Millions of kids will see that it is OK to be gay. No need for shame, no need for embarrassment, no need for hiding."

And that's what you are doing here today. You are saving lives.

You are saving the lives of our Transgender brothers and sisters – 41 percent of Transgender youth have attempted suicide. That's 25 times the rate of everyone else.

Is it any wonder? We all know the challenges that our Trans community faces in New York. They're told they are not normal. They can lose their jobs. They can lose their homes.

That's why it is so important that we pass GENDA this year under the leadership of Senator Daniel Squadron and Assembly Member Dick Gottfried.

For Equality.

For Justice.

To Save Lives.

I urge you, when you speak to my colleagues, to members of the New York State Senate, put them on the spot.

Now, the Senate Democrats, under the great progressive leadership of Andrea Stewart Cousins, support getting this bill to the floor.

But we have to work on the Republicans. And the Independent Democratic Conference.

Go ahead. Make them feel a little heat.

Ask them if they will commit to putting GENDA on the floor for a vote.

Tell them about the lives they could save if we have equal rights for the Trans community in all of New York State.

This is going to be a big year for the LGBT community.

With the leadership of Nathan Schaefer, the Pride Agenda's chairman Louis Bradbury, and all of you, we can do great things together.

We can elect the first openly gay mayor of the City of New York.

We can pass a law to ban quack therapists from trying to convert our kids to be straight, a bill that our great straight ally Senator Gianaris and our own Assembly Member Deborah Glick are helping lead.

We can legalize surrogacy contracts in New York for LGBT families, an issue that I'm working on with Assembly Member Amy Paulin.

And most importantly – this year – we can and will pass the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act.

Thank you.