

Policy Position: Civil Rights and Protections

eliminating racism
empowering women

ywca

west central michigan

What We Believe

The practices, policies, beliefs, and systems that maintain racism and sexism are connected to and help to maintain other systems of oppression and discrimination, like heterosexism, ableism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, or xenophobia. In many communities, individuals are still not provided the same legal protections and rights as others, simply based on their race, gender identity, sexual orientation, income, immigration status, disability, etc. Such discrimination can result in higher rates of poverty, poorer health outcomes, and are at greater risk for experiencing individual, institutional, and systemic violence. Marginalization not only impacts an individual's health, wealth, and safety but also negatively impacts communities as a whole.

The YWCA's mission to eliminate racism and empower women is intersectional. This mission and framework recognize the interconnected experiences of discrimination that individuals within our community may face. Our mission statement, therefore, demands that we show up to advocate against the oppression that historically marginalized groups and individuals endure and lift up the stories of those most marginalized within our community. We seek to support policies and practices that prioritize the rights, protections, and safety of various communities and identities. The YWCA West Central Michigan also encourages nuanced conversations around inequity in advocacy work and public policies, as conversations that fail to address all facets of inequities may end up perpetuating the very problems our agency and policymakers may be seeking to resolve.

What We Know

- Michigan's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, prohibits discrimination based upon religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, height, weight, familial status, or marital status, but does not include prohibitions on discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Michigan law does not prohibit housing discrimination, employment discrimination, discrimination in public accommodation, or discrimination in education based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Michigan was recently ranked in the lowest category of equity achievement in the State Equality Index [1].
- In 2015, only 16% of Michigan's LGBTQ+ employees were covered by local non-discrimination policies [2].

- In a study of digital housing advertisements conducted by the FHCWM in 2014, over 180 instances of discriminatory language were reported in a two-year period with 88% of these listings containing language allegedly discriminating against families with children [3].
- The Michigan Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released a report in 2020 specifically focused on voting rights in Michigan and the potential discrimination in access to voting on the basis of race, color, age, religion, or disability. They found that incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, voters with limited-English proficiency, voters with disabilities, and voters who are transgender and gender-nonconforming experienced barriers to voting [4].

What We Support

At the federal, state, and local levels, the YWCA West Central Michigan seeks to educate, advocate, and urges policymakers to

- Ensuring full, fair, and transparent voting rights and representation processes.
- Support efforts to advance the legal protections and safety for members of the LGBTQ+ community, and for immigrant women, children, and families.
- Ensure fair housing practices and end housing discrimination at the local and state level.

*Adopted by YWCA West Central Michigan Board of Directors
in February 2021*

[1] Warbelow, S., Avant, C., and Kutney, C. (2020) *State Equality Index*. Washington, DC: Human Rights Campaign Foundation. Retrieved from <https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/resources/HRC-SEI2020.pdf?mtime=20210124164058&focal=none>

[2] Brown, T., Freeman, S., Mallory, C., & Sears, B. (April 2019). The Impact of Stigma and Discrimination against LGBT People in Michigan. The Williams Institute. Retrieved from williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Impact-LGBT-Discrimination-MI-Apr-2019.pdf

[3] Community Development Department, "2015 Analysis of Impediment to Fair Housing Choice," City of Grand Rapids, p. 61-62, (2015)

[4] U.S Commission on Civil Rights (April 2020). *Voting Rights and Access in Michigan: A Report of the Michigan Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights*. Retrieved from <https://www.usccr.gov/press/2020/04-27-Michigan-Advisory-Committee-VR-Report-PR.pdf>