

IMPACT

REPORT

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A message from our Executive Director, Ben

Every few months, we write to share important updates about the ACLU of Ohio's new and ongoing litigation, statewide advocacy, grassroots initiatives, and public education campaigns. Yes, the political terrain can be hostile to civil liberties and civil rights, but the ACLU of Ohio consistently shows up in smart, strategic ways to fight in both principle and practice for the best ideals of fairness, freedom, and justice. This Impact Report demonstrates the power of good people united to make a difference.

As a member and donor, you position us to lead with determination, agility, practicality, and hope. Thank you for your continued support.

J. Bennett Guess
Executive Director



Want to impact change for generations to come? Include the ACLU of Ohio in your estate plan and commit to fighting for freedom and defending democracy with a strong legacy. Please email give@acluohio.org and our Development Department will follow up with more information.

A Most Prideful Season

In June, we proudly showed up to march, dance, cheer, and honor Ohio's LGBTQ+ community at Pride festivals throughout the state. Increasing our presence every year, we're now proud to be an active, visible sponsor in 13 cities in 2024! We stand in complete solidarity with our LGBTQ+ neighbors, family members, friends, and co-workers. Ohio is OUR home, too.

Pride is a time for love, acceptance, resistance, and queer activism, with much-needed opportunities to pay homage to all who pave the way for LGBTQ+ equality. As we reflect on progress we have made, we also recognize the perpetual sting of anti-LGBTQ+ scapegoating, especially the wave of hateful and hurtful anti-trans legislation flooding the nation and, specifically, Ohio.

When facing adversity, we also create change - in the courts, at the Statehouse, in our communities.

Remember, Pride is still protest, and the ACLU of Ohio will never stop fighting for a more equitable future for all Ohioans.



Dismantling Abortion Restrictions

In the last few months, the ACLU of Ohio has undertaken legal actions to challenge abortion restrictions that stand in clear violation of Ohio's newly enacted constitutional amendment. Ohio voters in November 2023 made clear that they support reproductive freedom and bodily autonomy, and these filings are just the first step toward making the will of Ohioans a true reality.

The first lawsuit, filed on March 29, challenges several Ohio laws that together force abortion patients to wait a minimum of 24 hours after receiving unnecessary state-mandated information, in person, before they can access their desired abortion care. In our second major filing, we amended a complaint challenging a ban on telehealth medication abortion services, while simultaneously challenging other laws in Ohio that restrict access to this safe option.

The new Reproductive Freedom Amendment enshrines the explicit and fundamental right to abortion and forbids the state from burdening, prohibiting, penalizing, and interfering with access to abortion, and discriminating against abortion patients and providers. These arbitrary, medically unnecessary anti-abortion restrictions profoundly limit Ohioans' ability to exercise their state constitutional rights. **We urge the court to strike them down.**

Drag Is Not A Crime!

In Ohio and across the nation, the trans and gender-nonconforming community are facing all-out legislative attacks. So, the ACLU of Ohio kicked off Pride Month with a celebratory call-to-action drag event, highlighting efforts to protect the LGBTQ+ community and safeguard freedom of expression for all. On the eve of Cleveland's annual Pride festival, show-hosts Betty Aboddum and Malibu Peruu, alongside special guest performers, rocked the Music Box Supper Club with powerful performances and moving personal testimonies.

Our friends at TransOhio and Trans Allies of Ohio joined as community partners. Together, we created an evening of true solidarity. Thanks to everyone in Northeast Ohio and beyond who attended this fabulous party. The love and joy were palpable.

The DRAG SHOWS must go on!



Court Victory for Trans Youth!

In our last Impact Report, we promised a lawsuit challenging House Bill 68, enacted legislation that seeks to ban gender-affirming care for transgender youth. Good news: we filed our lawsuit on March 26, and by April 16, we had received a temporary restraining order preventing the law from taking immediate effect. This ruling is a victory for transgender Ohioans and their families.

A trial has been set by the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas for July 15, and the law remains blocked as the legal battle continues. We will not stop fighting until this cruel restriction is permanently ended. Ohio families have a constitutional right to make personal healthcare decisions without government intrusion.

Bans off our bodies!



Campus Free Speech

There has been a newfound wave of campus protests across Ohio and, as students demonstrate this summer and beyond, we remind school administrators that freedom of expression is a cornerstone of education in democracy. Students have always played a vital role in protests, and the ACLU of Ohio has a long-standing relationship with campus demonstrations, dating back to the tragic Kent State shootings of 1970 when our organization represented the families of those who were senselessly killed. History has repeatedly shown that armed police should be involved only as a last resort. To do otherwise only escalates tensions on campuses.

Institutions of higher learning – whether public or private – should be strong defenders of the First Amendment. At the same time, all students deserve to be safe and to learn free from discrimination based on religion, race, or ethnicity. Threats and violence remain illegal, and antisemitism and Islamophobia must be rejected.



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