Equality Michigan has been working for decades to make sure LGBTQ+ community members’ voices are heard in Lansing. Forty years after the first bill was introduced to include gay and lesbian individuals in the state’s non-discrimination protections, we celebrated the enactment of Senate Bill 4, adding sexual orientation, gender identity and expression to our Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. And we didn’t stop there.

In November of 2022, we were reveling in what appeared to be the election of the first pro-equality majority in Michigan’s history. On the heels of engaging with 225,000 equality voters across the state, our freshly formed #HateWontWin Coalition had a long to-do list of what we hoped we could accomplish. The best way to summarize what lie ahead in 2023 is to simply say that after the legislature was sworn in on January 11, they introduced seven bills that were to be understood as the tone-setting for the new majority’s agenda, and yes, LGBTQ+ civil rights was among them.

**A LOT CAN CHANGE IN A YEAR’S TIME, AND IN MICHIGAN’S CASE, A LOT DID.**

By the end of March, LGBTQ+ non-discrimination protections had been signed into law. In April, we brought one-hundred community members to Lansing from across the state, the first such effort in more than a half-decade. We kicked off June with Governor Gretchen Whitmer signing an executive order establishing Michigan’s first LGBTQ+ commission, and we ended June by passing two bills designed to protect youth from conversion “therapy.” In November, a bill to prohibit the use of the LGBTQ-panic defense made it through the State House. Finally, we saw the introduction of a bill-package to ease the legal name change process for transgender residents and codify access to accurate gender markers on IDs and birth certificates.

This is a great opportunity to reflect on the victories and challenges that have shaped our journey towards a more inclusive and equal Michigan for all. Most exciting though, is seeing and being a part of the groundswell of energy that’s continuing to lead our state into the future. We can hardly wait for 2024.

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