



The Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp (NCVC) has led the effort statewide against discriminatory state legislation since 2016, the first year after the controversial ‘bathroom bill’ passed in North Carolina.

In response, the NCVC created Tennessee Thrives, a statewide business coalition to demonstrate opposition to these types of bills. The NCVC has been the leading organization for Tennessee Thrives in operations and financial support. Today, over 450 Tennessee businesses have joined and signed the pledge. Our business opposition to these bills underscores that Tennessee is a welcoming state that values inclusion. A list of current Thrives members and the pledge can be found at TennesseeThrives.org.

The effort has been very successful. While Tennessee has received media attention for these bills, the great majority have been defeated. Prior to the 2021 session, 23 bills have been introduced and only four have passed. Those that passed were greatly mitigated during the legislative process, ensuring that practical applications have not caused any individual discrimination.

The 2021 Tennessee General Assembly presented many unique challenges for this conversation. Of most significance was a national strategy that included Tennessee to introduce and pass multiple pieces of model legislation that had nothing to do with that individual state. Nationally, over 30 states considered anti-transgender legislation and over 250 targeted bills were introduced in Tennessee, twelve bills were filed and five passed. While the outcome was more than previous years for our state, so was the business engagement in opposition to these bills. In addition to Tennessee Thrives almost 220 Tennessee businesses signed an open letter demonstrating opposition to these bills.

The NCVC has a policy against discrimination and a robust diversity and inclusion program providing continuing education and connection with D&I leaders in the community.

Nashville’s track record regarding diversity and inclusion both in practice and leadership is very progressive. Currently, the Nashville Metropolitan Council, the governing body in the city, has a record five openly LGBTQ Nashvillians as members. They created the LGBTQ Caucus in 2019 and have been a tremendous body of influence for diversity and inclusion discussions within city government and the community at large. Twenty members of the Nashville Metropolitan Council’s 40-member body are female and eight members of the nine-member Metro Nashville School Board are female. In 2019, then-Mayor David Briley signed an historic executive order for LGBTQ-owned businesses to be a recognized category for the city’s procurement process, opening more economic opportunities and providing a better understand of the economic benefit from LGBTQ-owned businesses. Nashville was the first city in the South to make such a decree. The Nashville Mayor’s office, Metro Nashville Police Department and Metro Nashville Fire Department have full-time positions of LGBTQ Community Liaisons to foster relationships and create programming. The Nashville Metropolitan Council on numerous occasions has approved resolutions in opposition to discriminatory legislation and the city has implemented diversity and sexual harassment awareness and prevention training to all city employees, and members of public boards and commissions.

Nashville has a long-standing reputation as a welcoming, inclusive city. We understand the resulting frustration over the discriminatory bills that are discussed. We encourage all visitors to understand those few instances do not reflect the values of our city and to come experience Music City’s warm and friendly nature. In fact, the best way to express displeasure at these few legislative instances at the state is to support the city that is doing so much in word and practice to foster acceptance and inclusion for all.

We look forward to seeing you soon.