



Equality New York
1129 Dean Street, Suite 3
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To: Senator Liz Krueger, Finance Chair
Assemblymember Helene Weinstein, Finance Chair

Tuesday, February 14, 2023

My name is Melissa Sklarz and I am the Government Relations Liaison at Equality New York, the only statewide advocacy organization working to advance equality and justice for all LGBTQI New Yorkers and their families. Among our responsibilities to our communities is organizing, lobbying, advocating, training, and educating, both within our communities and among institutional stakeholders statewide.

I am writing today to discuss our LGBTQI Advocacy Institute. Our Advocacy Institute provides the education and resources needed to help build the leadership of all LGBTQI New Yorkers. Participants are provided with the training needed to understand the theoretical and programmatic components of effective organizing, along with the tools needed to implement a successful campaign in local communities. The goal of the program is for individuals to identify local challenges in the community and create solutions through developing programs, community building, and policy change.

The programming includes monthly meetings and training to support and foster projects. Each class will be taught by experienced advocates, follow core curriculum, including readings, and be 100% tuition free.

The current curriculum includes community organizing, virtual campaigning, and community rapid response. All three tracks will study campaigns and movements throughout history. Our students will become educated on current tools and technologies. Our advocates will be trained to identify, engage, and implement critical



issues and concerns within their environments. Our participants will learn practical strategies to help create a new generation of empowered leaders.

It is easy to disregard the need to connect and educate living in an online urban setting. Queer people live in New York to be involved and engaged. Our Advocacy Institute does not assume like minded people will find one another by chance. In our polarized increasingly dangerous culture, it is essential that our LGBTQI communities be organized and educated and ready for a future that is targeting our most vulnerable.

Equality New York is writing to ask for \$30,000. We are confident that these resources will help sustain our professional educators, provide state of the art tools and supplies, and to communicate state wide of this unique queer focused opportunity for education and empowerment. Nowhere else in the state are these services and curriculum available. We promise to provide an annual report to quantify and show who, what, when and how many are being supported by this work. We believe that queer New Yorkers should have access for community support from Buffalo to Brookhaven and we feel strongly that our state Legislature agrees.

You can learn more about our work and full list of programming at www.equalityny.org

Our Equality New York team is available to answer any questions you might have.

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