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FIRST LADY CHIRLANE MCCRAY LAUNCHES NEW CITYWIDE AD CAMPAIGN FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

As a part of the NYC Unity Project, “We Are LGBTQ Youth” campaign hits subways, buses, and social media throughout May and June

NEW YORK—First Lady Chirlane McCray announced today the launch of “**We Are LGBTQ Youth**,” a sweeping new ad campaign aimed at increasing the visibility of LGBTQ young people and connecting them to LGBTQ-affirming services available across the City, from health and safety supports to education and legal rights. The campaign is part of the NYC Unity Project, a citywide effort to make New York City the most welcoming city in the nation for LGBTQ youth.

“We Are LGBTQ Youth” ads feature 17 different young LGBTQ New Yorkers proudly expressing who they are and encouraging all LGBTQ youth to learn more about the array of City programs and supports accessible through nyc.gov/unityproject. The campaign will run across the City’s subways, buses, and digital platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram through the end of June 2018.

“For so many young people, New York City is the first place they can completely and unapologetically be themselves. I felt that way when I first came to the city and I want to make sure it continues to be that way,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray, co-chair of the Commission on Gender Equity and lead for the NYC Unity Project**. “This ad campaign sends a strong message to all young people that NYC is their home and they are always welcome. We want every young LGBTQ person to know that New York City supports them and

there is always somewhere they can turn if they need help.”



NYC Unity Project resources are housed within the recently-launched Generation NYC digital platform, a first-of-its-kind digital platform for New Yorkers ages 13-24. This groundbreaking “mobile first” website – accessible by phone, tablet, or computer – was designed to help all young New Yorkers of all

backgrounds and identities navigate the sometimes challenging waters of adolescence and young adulthood by offering tailored resources and opportunities. With today's launch, the platform now features NYC Unity Project and LGBTQ-specific resources.

NYC Unity Project is the City's first coordinated, multi-agency effort to address the unique challenges and needs of LGBTQ youth. The NYC Unity Project lays out a bold commitment to deepen and expand upon the City's investments in LGBTQ services, programs, and policy change, prioritizing the needs of LGBTQ young people.

"When I was young, I saw barely any images of LGBTQ people like me in ads, on TV, or in the media. We've certainly come a long way since the old days of the 80's and 90's but not far enough!" said **NYC Council Speaker Corey Johnson**. "I applaud First Lady Chirlane McCray for launching this ad campaign to increase the visibility of members of my community and educate them on city services that were designed to help them."

"LGBTQ youth face health disparities across the board, including disproportionately high rates of mental health and substance use concerns," said **Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett**. "Research has demonstrated that family and community acceptance is critical to promoting positive mental and physical health. This is an empowering ad campaign, and I want to thank First Lady Chirlane McCray for continuing to make our city a more inclusive, healthy and safe space for young LGBTQ New Yorkers."

"Schools must provide welcoming and supportive environments for all students, regardless of their gender identity/expression or sexual orientation, and we're proud to partner with the NYC Unity Project to deliver critical resources to LGBT youth across the City. I thank First Lady McCray for her leadership in launching this powerful campaign and her continued support of LGBT youth," said **DOE Chancellor Richard Carranza**.

"New York City is a leader in providing innovative ways to empower families and communities to stand up for LGBTQ youth, and at ACS we work hard to make the child welfare and youth justice systems more welcoming, respectful and responsive to their needs," said **ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell**. "The NYC Unity Project is breaking ground to improve citywide services and supports, and this ad campaign sends a bold message to LGBTQ young people that you are seen, your needs are our responsibility, and we stand with you."

"This administration has made an unprecedented investment in young people, including runaway and homeless youth who identify as LGBTQ and require programs specific to their unique needs. DYCD is proud to be part of the NYC Unity Project, and we look forward to working with First Lady McCray and our agency partners in helping to ensure that our City remains a welcoming place for all," said **DYCD Commissioner Bill Chong**.

"In this current political climate, the NYC Unity Project's mission is more critical than ever," said **NYC Unity Project Director Ashe McGovern**. "Through this public campaign, we are saying unequivocally to LGBTQ young people in our City and across the country that we see them, that their lives matter, and that we are deeply committed to creating new policies and

programs that will remedy the particular inequities they face, in an effort to tangibly improve their daily lives."

While New York City's LGBTQ youth fare significantly better than their peers nationally, too many vulnerable young people continue to fall through the cracks and lack services that meet their specific needs. Evidence demonstrates that NYC's LGBTQ youth are far more likely than their peers to experience an array of social, physical, and mental health disparities—from dating violence to bullying to homelessness to attempted suicide.

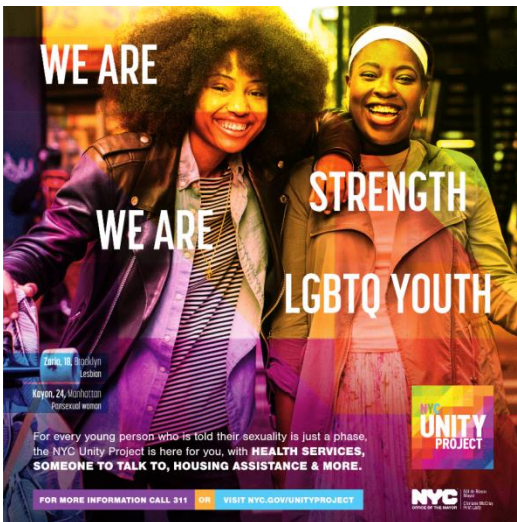
To strengthen and better coordinate services across the City and ensure no young person falls through the cracks, the NYC Unity Project works collectively across 16 city agencies to better reach LGBTQ youth where they live, where they learn, and in their communities.



NYC Unity Project includes participation from the Administration for Children's Services, NYC Children's Cabinet, Commission on Gender Equity, Commission on Human Rights, Department of Education, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Homeless Services, Department of Youth and Community Development, Human Resources Administration, Mayor's Center for Faith and Community Partnerships, Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, Mayor's Community Affairs Unit, Mayor's Office of Operations, Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence, New York Police Department, and NYC Health + Hospitals.

The City continues to lead the nation in protecting LGBTQ rights:

- In April 2018, the de Blasio administration announced it would become the largest city in the country to house incarcerated people according to their [gender identity](#), and not their sex assigned at birth.
- In June 2017, the de Blasio administration published New York City's first-ever [LGBTQ Health Care Bill of Rights](#).
- In June 2016, New York City became the first municipality to launch a citywide campaign specifically [affirming the right of transgender individuals](#) to use the bathroom consistent with their gender identity or expression.
- In March 2016, Mayor de Blasio issued an executive order requiring City agencies to ensure that employees and members of the public are given [equal access to City single-sex facilities](#) without being required to show identification, medical documentation or any other form of proof or verification of gender.
- In December 2015, the NYC Commission on Human Rights issued legal enforcement guidance defining specific gender identity protections under the City Human Rights Law, including equal bathroom access, as well as access to housing, employment, public accommodations, and other protections.



The administration has also enhanced services to address LGBTQ homelessness, including opening a 24-hour drop-in center in Queens specifically targeting LGBTQ youth, and the first-ever City-funded transitional independent living homes with specialized services for transgender youth. Earlier this year, the de Blasio administration opened Marsha's House—named after famed LGBTQ activist Marsha P. Johnson—in the Bronx, the first-ever shelter for LGBTQ young persons in the New York City adult shelter system, offering nearly 90 homeless individuals, 30 years and under, the opportunity to be sheltered in a welcoming and supportive space that provides targeted resources.

The administration has also funded 500 additional beds for runaway and homeless youth, all of which are available to LGBTQ youth. By June 30, 2018, the total number of beds will expand to 653. This total will increase to 753 by the end of June 2019.

“Thank you to First Lady Chirlane McCray for advocating for our LGBTQ youth. This new campaign will make sure our city feels like a safe and inclusive place for all children and teenagers. Youth homelessness runs highest among the LGBTQ adolescent community, which is why I worked closely in 2017 with the Dominican Women's Development Center to open up the first LGBTQ Youth Homelessness Center in Upper Manhattan. I believe this new campaign will go a long way in connecting our youth to the right resources they need and deserve,” said **State Senator Marisol Alcántara**.

“It's a perilous time for LGBTQ Americans, and young people are among the most vulnerable members of our communities. These initiatives reassure LGBTQ youth that they deserve our unconditional support. I applaud the First Lady and the City of New York for their commitment to providing resources for all young New Yorkers regardless of their gender identity or expression,” said **State Senator Brad Hoylman**.

“As the sponsor of several bills in Albany to protect the rights of LGBT youth, we must do all we can to ensure that they have equal opportunities and that their civil rights are never denied. With so many assaults on our basic freedoms coming from Washington, states and cities must step up to make sure this nation is all inclusive,” said **Assistant Speaker Felix W. Ortiz**.

“Tolerance in New York City is not an adequate standard. First Lady Chirlane McCray's leadership in the “We Are LGBTQ Youth” ad campaign promotes a standard of unwavering acceptance. As the first openly gay man elected in the New York State Assembly, I triumphed my fears of never seeing an LGBTQ elected official. This campaign shows NYC's recognition of our responsibility to support and encourage LGBTQ Youth to pursue their dreams while also affording them all necessary resources to do so,” said **Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell**.

“This ad campaign sends a loud and clear message that LGBTQ youth are welcome in New York City,” said **NYC Council Member Daniel Dromm, chair of the Council's LGBT Caucus**. “Such affirmation and support is crucial to the well-being of our city's LGBTQ community, especially our young people. The ads build trust between these youth and city government, an important step in connecting them with the city services they need to live happy and healthy lives. As an openly-gay man who lived in NYC at a time when the vast majority of LGBTQ people suffered from institutional neglect, I am pleased that First Lady McCray is taking action to move us in the right direction.”

“Our City is stronger and more successful when we remove barriers between residents and City services. I am proud to see New York City welcome, celebrate, and support LGBTQ youth with the multi-agency NYC Unity Project and the new “We Are LGBTQ Youth” campaign. This campaign extends recent victories for LGBTQ New Yorkers and demonstrates our national leadership upholding human rights for all,” said **Council Member Carlos Menchaca**.

“New York City has long been a beacon of hope for LGBTQ youth across the country,” said **Council Member Van Bramer**. “It is important that we live up to our reputation of being welcoming and inclusive to all, and in doing so, provide resources to those who need them most. Increasing awareness of the NYC Unity Project through the “We Are LGBTQ Youth” campaign will help the youngest members of our LGBTQ community feel connected to and supported by the City. I look forward to seeing the ads in the coming weeks and, as a gay man I know that I would have felt safer and more confident if campaigns and resources like this existed in my youth.”

"The Center sees over 1,000 LGBTQ young people who engage in our youth programming every year, and we know first-hand that visibility is a crucial step in creating pathways to happy, healthy lives," said **Glenda Testone, Executive Director of NYC's LGBT Community Center**. "Campaigns like 'We are LGBTQ Youth' and First Lady McCray's NYC Unity Project make great strides to ensure that all LGBTQ New Yorkers know about and are connected to organizations like The Center that provide crucial programs and services to our community."

“‘We are LGBTQ Youth’ gives lifesaving visibility to our young people who hold the potential for greatness,” said **Lillian Rivera, Director of Advocacy & Capacity Building, Hetrick-Martin Institute**. LGBTQ youth can only benefit from seeing images of themselves, connecting to community and being proud of who they are in a world that can be difficult for them to navigate. HMI celebrates New York City’s First Lady Chirlane McCray’s commitment to the emotional well-being of LGBTQ youth and this initiative serves as an example for the entire nation on how to celebrate and include all young people.”

"I applaud the First Lady for her efforts to make LGBTQ youth more visible, and to connect them to needed services. New York City's most vulnerable LGBTQ youth are now substantially safer and better cared for than they were prior to her husband becoming Mayor," **Carl Siciliano, Executive Director, Ali Forney Center**.

“Young people are building upon the lessons learned and progress made by the LGBTQ rights movement, and they are challenging all of us to think more expansively and inclusively about

gender and sexuality,” said **Matthew McMorrow, Mayor’s Senior Advisor, LGBTQ Community Affairs**. “At the same time, LGBTQ youth face high rates of bullying, family rejection and stigma that too often lead to other challenges like depression and homelessness. The Unity Project’s public awareness campaign sends a clear message to our City’s LGBTQ young people that they are celebrated and valued and that there are resources available to support them.”

“New York City’s ‘We Are LGBTQ Youth’ campaign is an exciting new way to connect LGBTQ young people to resources and programs throughout the city,” said **Amit Paley, CEO and Executive Director of The Trevor Project**, the world’s largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ youth. “With this increased visibility, residents will get to know more about the LGBTQ community, its unique needs, and specific resources to pass along to the LGBTQ young people in their lives.”

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