

A large, vibrant rainbow flag is the central focus of the image. In the center of the flag is a large, stylized fist symbol, also in rainbow colors. The background is a blurred photograph of a diverse group of people at an outdoor event, likely a pride parade, with trees and a clear sky visible.

# OUTBermuda **POLICY MANIFESTO**

*Version: January 30 2025*

# OUR CALL TO ACTION

Bermuda stands at a crossroads. Bermuda's future depends on our ability to grow together. Many Bermudians seek residence elsewhere, searching for a new home where they can thrive economically, can enjoy equal rights under the law, and live freely as they are. By championing inclusion and opportunity, we can create a Bermuda that works for all of us. This manifesto is a vision for a better Bermuda for every Bermudian.

The upcoming general election has the potential to change the landscape of Bermudian politics with the potential of four or more candidates running in each constituency. As Bermuda's only LGBTQ+ Charity, we feel it is necessary for us at OUTBermuda to use our platform to make clear policy recommendations across several issues on behalf of the Bermudian LGBTQ+ Community.

LGBTQ+ Bermudians deserve to have our voices heard and our needs, wants and concerns valued by our policymakers. **We too, deserve a future, a Bermuda where we can thrive openly, safely, and with dignity.**

OUTBermuda calls on all political candidates to take a firm, unequivocal stand for LGBTQ+ rights. This is not the time for silence or neutrality. We need leaders who will champion equality, push for bold reforms, and commit to building a Bermuda where no one is left behind because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.





**This manifesto is more than a list of policy recommendations—it is a demand for action.**

It is a roadmap for a fairer, safer, and more inclusive Bermuda. We urge every candidate, party, and potential policymaker to engage with these proposals and make them a part of their campaign platforms. The time for empty promises is over.

**We need real commitments, real policies, and real change.**



Do you have questions? Comments? We want to hear from you. As part of our continued advocacy throughout this general election cycle, we will be organizing a series of meetings with individual candidates, political parties and community members interested in learning directly from members of the local LGBTQ+ community about these policy proposals and their significance.



Those interested can reach out to:

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**For LGBTQ+ Bermudian voters and allies, this document is also your tool for advocacy.** Use it when speaking with candidates, challenge them on where they stand, and demand that they take action. Change doesn't happen by waiting—it happens when we make our voices heard and refuse to back down.

**This election has the potential to be a turning point. Let's make it count.**

# BUILDING LGBTQ+ HEALTH EQUITY

## 1 Expand LGBTQ+ Mental Health Support

LGBTQ+ persons, particularly youth, are shown to be disproportionately affected by adverse mental health challenges due to societal stigma, fear, and anti-LGBTQ+ harassment. To address this, the government should support, and fund targeted mental health programs that provide direct support to LGBTQ+ Bermudians. Our partnership with Solstice to provide free therapy services to LGBTQ+ Bermudians is one such program that could benefit from funding.

## 2 Ensure Cultural Humility in Healthcare

Due to justified fears around disclosure and discrimination, LGBTQ+ Bermudians also face challenges accessing public healthcare. To address this, the next government should implement mandatory cultural humility training programs to ensure all healthcare professionals, first responders, and those in allied health fields (social workers, school councillors, prison officers, etc) are able to support and treat LGBTQ+ Bermudians with the dignity and respect they deserve.

## 3 Strengthen Confidentiality Protections

Given the small size of the Bermudian community, there should also be increased training and stronger regulations around confidentiality protocols for all healthcare professionals, first responders, and those in allied health fields to protect LGBTQ+ persons from nonconsensual disclosure of their identity.

## 4 Improve Access to Gender-Affirming Care

Transgender people have existed in Bermuda for decades, but they often struggle to find and access gender affirming care on island. The government should formalize accessible, affirming healthcare pathways for transgender Bermudians, including clear guidelines for medical transition services and legal recognition of their gender identity based on self-determination.

# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR ALL

1

## Addressing Bullying and Harassment

Anti-LGBTQ+ bullying and harassment is rampant in the Bermudian school environment being experienced at the hands of peers, parents of peers, teachers and administrators. Often little to no action is taken to support the victim and educate (or discipline when required) the perpetrator. The government should ensure all school staff receive appropriate training, and all schools establish clear, formalized protocols for addressing peer-on-peer, teacher-on-student, and parent-on-student bullying and harassment whether it occurs in person or online.

2

## LGBTQ+ Student Groups in Schools

The whole school environment should be a safe and affirming space for LGBTQ+ young people to make friendships, receive peer and professional support, and advocate for their rights. But given the hostile nature of Bermuda's school environment, particularly our public middle and senior schools, for LGBTQ+ youth, the government should support, instead of trying to block, the creation of LGBTQ+ student groups across all signature schools. 'The Village' at Bermuda College stands as shining example of the need and benefit of such groups.

3

## Comprehensive Sex and Relationship Education

Inclusive and age-appropriate comprehensive sex and relationship education (CSRE) in all schools has long been shown to reduce rates of unwanted teenage pregnancy, reduce rates of STIs, increase awareness of the signs of sexual violence and how to protect against it, and increase understanding of LGBTQ+ identities fostering a safer and healthier environment for all our children. The next government should ensure that CSRE programs are developed for and implemented in all schools, public and private. This should be a cornerstone of the ongoing education reform.

# EQUALITY UNDER THE LAW

- 1** | **Hate Crime and Hate Speech Laws**  
Bermuda needs comprehensive hate crime and hate speech laws to address and deter violence, abuse, and harmful rhetoric against marginalized groups, such as LGBTQ+ individuals. The next government should begin the process of creating hate crime and hate speech legislative and enforcement frameworks.
- 2** | **Gender Identity**  
To safeguard transgender and non-binary individuals from discrimination in employment, housing, and public services the next government should ensure 'gender identity' is added as a protected class within the Human Rights Act alongside sexual orientation.
- 3** | **Marriage Equality**  
The repeal of same-sex marriage rights was a grave injustice that affects the lives of many LGBTQ+ Bermudians and gave Bermuda a bad human rights reputation globally. The next government should rectify this and restore full marriage equality to uphold human rights standards and ensure all Bermudians are equal under the law.
- 4** | **Age of Consent**  
Despite recent reforms, there remains an inconsistency within our current consent legislation as the age to consent to anal sex remains 18, while all other forms of sex have an age of consent of 16. The next government should review this legislation and amend it to ensure consistency and equality under the law for all Bermudians.
- 5** | **Housing Protections**  
Although, sexual orientation is considered a protected class under the Human Rights Amendment Act 2013, LGBTQ+ Bermudians, couples, and families still report facing significant challenges with housing discrimination. The next government should strengthen the awareness and enforcement of relevant legislation to address ongoing housing inequities and ensure landlords cannot deny an LGBTQ+ tenants simply on the basis of their identity.

In addition to the above five legal reforms, the next government should establish a National LGBTQ+ Advisory Board with similar powers and remit as the existing National Youth Policy Board and Gender Affairs Council. This body will ensure LGBTQ+ Bermudians, and their needs, continue to be considered and valued at a policy level and can work with the civil service and elected government to help action the other items contained within this policy manifesto.

# OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

## Third Sector Funding & Support

It is no secret that Bermudian charities largely rely on private donations, cooperate funding, or foundation grants to support their work. It is also no secret that given the current economic crisis many charities are struggling financially as while the demand for their services increases, most funding is decreasing. The next government should pledge at least \$20 million annually to the third sector through open-to-all grants and targeted partnerships.

We at OUTBermuda, would love to see some of this proposed third sector funding be directed towards supporting and protecting LGBTQ+ Bermudians. This could be realised through support/funding for Bermuda Pride, support for charities looking to make their services more LGBTQ+ inclusive, a government-funded public awareness campaign celebrating diversity and inclusion, and/or for the aforementioned targeted mental health programs, LGBTQ+ student groups, and cultural humility trainings for government staff.





## Feminist Foreign Policy

We strongly encourage the government to adopt a feminist foreign policy. Feminist foreign policy (FFP) is a transformative approach to international relations that prioritizes gender equality, human rights, and social justice in diplomatic, trade, and development efforts. For Bermuda, adopting an FFP is crucial as we strengthen ties with the Middle East and seek membership in CARICOM—two regions where gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights remain contested.

As the first English-speaking Caribbean jurisdiction to decriminalize homosexuality and legally recognize same-sex couples, Bermuda has a responsibility to lead by example, advocating for the fair treatment of LGBTQ+ people across the region. While we must continue advancing rights domestically, in addition to their work around economic affairs and tourism, we should also leverage our overseas offices in London, Brussels, and Washington, D.C., to engage meaningfully with the international development and human rights communities.

Furthermore, the next government should push the UK government for permanent representation among their delegations in key multilateral bodies, including the UN, WHO, Council of Europe, and the Equal Rights Coalition, ensuring our voice is heard and our needs are represented on the global stage.





# Thank You

For more information about OUTBermuda and the work we do daily, please visit our website [www.outbermuda.org](http://www.outbermuda.org) or follow us on social media at @OUTBermuda.

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