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Michigan expands hate crime law to protect LGBTQ+ identities

The bill was originally proposed in 2023 but faced controversy after false claims that it would criminalize the act of misgendering someone.

By Molly Sprayregen (<https://www.lgbtqnation.com/author/mollysprayregen/>) Tuesday, January 28, 2025



Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D)

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D) has signed a bill adding sexual orientation and gender identity to the state's hate crime law, along with a companion bill (<https://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2023-2024/billenrolled/House/htm/2024-HNB-5401.htm>) amending sentencing guidelines for hate crimes.

The 1988 ethnic intimidation law initially applied only to religion, ethnicity, and race. The new law (<https://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2023-2024/billenrolled/House/htm/2024-HNB-5400.htm>) adds LGBTQ+ identities, as well as sex, age, disability, national origin, and affiliation with these groups.

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Out singer-songwriter Lucy Dacus is donating \$10k to people seeking gender-affirming healthcare (<https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2025/01/out-singer-songwriter-lucy-dacus-is-donating-10k-to-people-seeking-gender-affirming-healthcare/>)

“The government will never be the source of our validation or protection.”

The bill was originally proposed in 2023 but faced controversy after conservatives spread false claims (<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/michigan/2023/07/04/michigan-legislature-not-criminalize-pronoun-use-lgbtq-transgender-misgendering-fox-news-daily-mail/70379518007/>) that it would criminalize the act of misgendering someone. Lawmakers introduced a new version of the bill this year.

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“As a Jew in a time of rampant antisemitism, and as a gay man in a time of uncertain

rights, I promised the people of West Bloomfield, Commerce and the Lakes that I would move heaven and earth to tackle rising hate crimes and extremism,” said [\(https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2025/01/22/whitmer-signs-bills-sexual-orientation-gender-identity-hate-crime-law-criminalize-sex-tortion/77879302007/\)](https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2025/01/22/whitmer-signs-bills-sexual-orientation-gender-identity-hate-crime-law-criminalize-sex-tortion/77879302007/) state Rep. Noah Arbit (D), who co-sponsored the bill with Rep. Kristian Grant (D).

“Today, after two years of tremendous effort, battling disinformation, bigotry, lies and political paralysis, I am incredibly proud to have delivered on that promise in my first term with this new law.”

A first offense for committing a hate crime against one of the protected classes is punishable with a fine of \$5,000 and/or up to two years behind bars. Punishments worsen based on the severity of the crime and the number of offenses.

In a statement, out Michigan Attorney General [Dana Nessel](https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2022/10/get-know-michigan-attorney-general-dana-nessel/) (D) praised Gov. Whitmer for signing the bills in the wake of the hate being spread by the Trump administration.

“Over the past decade, we have seen not just an uptick in hate crimes, but a normalization of racist, antisemitic and bigoted language, symbolism and actions – including a close adviser to the President [giving the Nazi salute](https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2025/01/the-world-sees-elon-musks-gesture-as-a-hitler-salute-even-if-many-americans-deny-it/) during an inaugural rally just this week,” Nessel said. “It’s incumbent upon those of us with the authority to unilaterally denounce such sentiments; otherwise, there’s no stopping this behavior.”

Whitmer signed the two bills along with 17 others, including one focused on student mental health, one expanding protections from sexual violence, one expanding community violence intervention services, and another establishing a threat assessment team for schools to monitor student behavior and mitigate threats.

“Each of these bills build on my administration’s commitment to protecting Michiganders and their families,” Whitmer said in a statement. (<https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/news/press-releases/2025/01/22/whitmer-signs-bills-to-protect-students-increase-school-safety>) “Since I took office, we’ve invested over \$1.6 billion into public safety programs across six balanced, bipartisan budgets, ensuring Michiganders can feel safe no matter where they are. Together, let’s keep making a real difference in people’s lives.”

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