

2026 | CAPITOL INFORMATION & EDUCATION DAYS



Truth and Health: Protecting LGBTQ+ Communities From Commercial Tobacco & Nicotine Harms



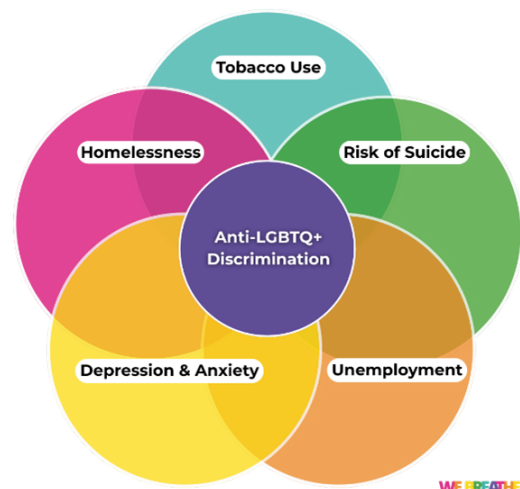
- Many LGBTQ+ bars, including in cities such as San Francisco and Oakland, allow smoking inside and/or outside their establishments. This exposes staff and patrons to unhealthy air quality, with 8 out of 13 Oakland and San Francisco bars surveyed having air the EPA considers “unhealthy”.⁽¹⁾
- Federal cuts in 2025 to tobacco prevention and cessation services have put vulnerable communities left without life-saving services.⁽²⁾ With LGBTQ+ people more likely to rely on Medicaid, our community is even more likely to lack access to affordable and affirming services to help with their quit journey.⁽³⁾

2025 and 2026 have Been the Worst Years for LGBTQ+ Health in Decades

- These issues are only getting worse for our communities. This moment calls for us to take a stand to support LGBTQ+ Communities more than ever as we also work to stop the Tobacco Industry.
- California has lost life-saving LGBTQ+ resources for youth AND adults, with the Fresno LGBTQ

Resource Center recently closing due to funding cuts.⁽⁴⁾ As more spaces shut down, LGBTQ+ people are more likely to become isolated and look for ways to cope, including tobacco use.⁽⁵⁾

- LGBTQ+ Communities have historically been targeted by the Tobacco Industry, with tobacco use prevalence among California’s transgender population being over 26%, far exceeding the use rates among the general population.⁽⁶⁾
- Transgender people’s identities are being questioned, with some elected officials asserting that LGBTQ+ issues are not ‘culturally normal’ during a time when LGBTQ rights are under attack.⁽⁷⁾
- There has been an escalation in the number of legislative proposals across the country attempting to undermine existing LGBTQ+ rights.^(8,9)



Calls to LGBTQ+ Crisis Hotlines increased up to 700% on November 6, 2024, the day after the 2024 elections.⁽¹⁰⁾

- The Tobacco Industry has targeted the LGBTQ+ community through a number of different ways, including exploiting the community's desire for recognition and support. ⁽¹¹⁾
- Stress and discrimination are strongly associated with higher tobacco product use by LGBTQ+ people. ⁽¹²⁾
- LGBTQ+ People now face an avalanche of hateful rhetoric, which increases the risk of using tobacco

as a way to cope. This rhetoric includes the national debate on whether transgender people deserve to exist. ^(9,12)

- Eighty percent (80%) of transgender people report wanting to downplay or hide their identity in 2024. ⁽¹³⁾



Ways to Support Your Local LGBTQ+ Community in 2026:

- 1 **Improve access to LGBTQ+ affirming mental health and tobacco cessation services;** when these services are available tobacco use goes down. ⁽¹⁴⁾
- 2 **Learn about different policies that protect LGBTQ+ people from tobacco,** including tobacco retail licenses and smokefree multi-unit housing.
- 3 **Address cuts in federal funding that impact LGBTQ+ services,** research and public health programs, such as tobacco prevention, in California.
- 4 **Show up to LGBTQ+ spaces,** including your local Pride events and LGBTQ+ Center to show support to the Community.
- 5 **Affirm that LGBTQ+ People belong,** and we are not a political inconvenience.

**Protect our Community from Tobacco.
Protect our Community from Discrimination.
STAND BY US.**

REFERENCES

Graphics by We Breathe

- 1 "Smoke-Free Bar Patios." LGBTQ Minus Tobacco, <https://www.lgbtqminustobacco.org/smoke-free-bar-patios>. Accessed 31 Mar. 2026
- 2 "What Federal Health Agency Cuts Mean for Tobacco Control." Truth Initiative, last updated 10 Dec. 2025, <https://truthinitiative.org/FederalCuts>. Accessed 31 Mar. 2026.
- 3 Sears, Brad, Andrew R. Flores, and Jet Harbeck. LGBT Adults with Medicaid as Their Primary Source of Health Insurance. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, May 2025, <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Medicaid-LGBT-May-2025.pdf>. Accessed 31 Mar. 2026.
- 4 Hawkins, Stephen. "Fresno EOC LGBTQ+ Resource Center to Close Due to Funding Shortfall." KMPH (FOX26), 12 Dec. 2025, <https://kmpfh.com/news/local/fresno-eoc-lgbtq-resource-center-to-close-due-to-funding-shortfall/>. Accessed 31 Mar. 2026. [kmpfh.com]
- 5 American Lung Association. Addressing Tobacco, Vape & Nicotine Use in LGBTQ+ Communities: A Guide for Public Health Professionals, Counselors and Community-Based Organizations. American Lung Association, 2022, https://www.lung.org/getmedia/4b933731-a092-4173-9220-7860075dbf69/052975_LGBTQ-Toolkit_v2-2.pdf. Accessed 31 Mar. 2026.
- 6 Wilson, B. D. M., & Herman, J. L. (2022). California LGBTQ+ adult population: Health behaviors and attitudes on tobacco. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. <https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publications/Documents/PDF/2022/CA-LGBTQ-Adult-Population-Health-Behaviors-and-Attitudes-on-Tobacco-report-jun2022.pdf>
- 7 Sprayregen, Molly. "Gavin Newsom Says Dems Need to Be 'More Culturally Normal' & Stop Talking About Pronouns." LGBTQ Nation, 24 Feb. 2026, <https://www.lgbtqnation.com/2026/02/gavin-newsom-says-dems-need-to-be-more-culturally-normal-stop-talking-about-pronouns/>. Accessed 31 Mar. 2026.
- 8 American Civil Liberties Union. (2025, March). Mapping attacks on LGBTQ rights in U.S. state legislatures in 2025. <https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights-2025>
- 9 Kinney MK, Pearson TE, Ralston Aoki J. Improving "Life Chances": Surveying the Anti-Transgender Backlash, and Offering a Transgender Equity Impact Assessment Tool for Policy Analysis. J Law Med Ethics. 2022;50(3):489-508. doi: 10.1017/jme.2022.89. PMID: 36398638; PMCID: PMC9679585.
- 10 The Trevor Project. (2025, January 22). The Trevor Project reported a 33% increase in crisis line volume on Inauguration Day. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/blog/the-trevor-project-reported-a-33-increase-in-crisis-line-volume-on-inauguration-day/>
- 11 Lewis K, Cunningham D, Valera P. Marketing Strategies Used by Tobacco Companies Targeting the Queer Community. Tobacco Use Insights. 2024;17. doi:10.1177/1179173X241265743
- 12 Figueroa W, Jankowski E, Curran H, Ennis AC, Poteat T, Morgan E, Klein E, Reczek R, Patterson JG. Minority stressors and tobacco use among a US sample of sexual and gender minority young adults. Drug Alcohol Depend. 2024 Aug 1;261:111356. doi: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2024.111356. Epub 2024 Jun 6. PMID: 38889573; PMCID: PMC11547702.
- 13 Goldberg, A. E., & Sears, B. (2025, March). Perceptions of transgender adults preparing for a Trump presidency. The Williams Institute. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-election-perceptions/>
- 14 Cesena, D, Kozlovich, S, Walker, PM, & Guzman, I. (2022). Tobacco Control: An Intersectional Approach, 2022. We Breathe: Supporting LGBTQ+ Tobacco-Control Communities Project

©2026

CA Tobacco Endgame Center for Organizing and Engagement
A Project of the American Heart Association

Funded by the California Department of Public Health, Grant # 24-10002
www.organizingtoendtobacco.org | organizingtoendtobacco@heart.org

