



OUR VIEW: Amazon's HQ2 could bring a much needed LGBTQ advocate to the Fight for Fairness in Pennsylvania

Earlier today, a group of activists under the name [“No Gay, No Way”](#) launched a media campaign discouraging Amazon.com from locating its second headquarters in Pennsylvania and eight other states, something that [Philadelphia](#), [Pittsburgh](#), and the [Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#) have been advocating for since the tech-retail giant announced it was accepting bids for HQ2. The Seattle-based company has promised to invest \$5 billion and add up to 50,000 jobs.

“It is shocking that Amazon would consider locating HQ2 with its over 50,000 employees in a state that doesn’t protect LGBT people or their families. In these nine states, it is legal to fire someone, deny them housing, or refuse them service just because of who they are or who they love,” said their spokesperson Conor Gaughan.



You may have seen the story circulating from [USA Today](#) or on [Philly.com](#).

Equality Pennsylvania has a slightly different view on the situation.

Here’s what you should know:

- **Equality Pennsylvania has been working for the past eight years to pass an inclusive statewide law that would ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, but [obstructionist leaders in the Pennsylvania Legislature have blocked it every time](#).** This remains, by far, the main reason discrimination against LGBTQ Pennsylvanians is legal. In fact, we have had pledges from the majority of representatives and senators to pass the act, but [Republican leadership refuses to advance a vote](#).
- **It’s important to recognize the [44 municipalities](#) across Pennsylvania that have banned discrimination by enacting a local ordinance, covering around**

one third of the state's population. The Cities of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh are two of those places, but many of the surrounding communities where many potential Amazon employees may live do not offer such protections. This affects housing, [public accommodations](#), and potentially employment for spouses and partners.

- **Amazon is ranked among the most LGBTQ-supportive companies in the nation by the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index.** In fact, president [Jeff Bezos was honored with the HRC 2017 Equality Award](#). They have [internal policies that prohibit discrimination and encourage LGBTQ inclusiveness](#). If they choose a Pennsylvania city as their second headquarters, we call on them to use their powerful voice and significant resources to advocate for LGBTQ-inclusive and supportive legislation across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Finally, while our state's "[Welcome to Pennsylvania: Pursue Your Happiness](#)" campaign is in full force, the state legislature's failure to pass and enact the PA Fairness Act coupled with [messages from PA House leadership](#) that discrimination is a Pennsylvania value, sends an all too clear message to LGBTQ individuals and families - **you are not equal here**.

The Bottom Line: Businesses want to have as many options for hiring the best talent. It's unfortunate that they need to think twice before they locate where some of that talent pool is intentionally targeted and driven away simply because of who they are and who they love. We hope Amazon.com will choose a Pennsylvania city so they can join in the #FightForFairness.

BY JOHN DAWE, CNP, CFRE

John Dawe, CNP, CFRE is Equality Pennsylvania's Interim Executive Director and is a nationally recognized expert in nonprofit governance and leadership, technology, and fundraising. He resides in Kingston, Pennsylvania, where there are no discrimination protections for LGBTQ citizens.

Photo Slug: The above ad appeared on NoGayNoWay's social media campaign to block Amazon.com from establishing its second world headquarters ("HQ2") in Pennsylvania.