

Battle for Healthcare

The same day the Obergefell decision came down, Cincinnati Public Library employee Rachel Dovel got bad news. Her health insurance would not cover all her transition-related healthcare, including gender confirmation surgery, because the Library had not purchased the add-on to the insurance plan. Dovel brought this up with the library, and when but faced more opposition than she expected. Then she organized a public response. The Library administration maintained that it was a “business decision.” Dovel was left with no recourse but to sue for her medical care with the help of lawyer and longtime activist Scott Knox.

At the end of 2016, the Library’s insurance provider folded transgender health coverage and several other types of care into their main plans. In turn, the Library moved up their renewal from August to January 2017 so their employees would be covered under the inclusive plan. The Library settled Dovel’s suit in May 2017, promising not just to cover Transgender healthcare but consider LGBTQ employees and patrons thanks to Dovel’s persistence.

The Fight Continues

Persistence has brought Cincinnati’s LGBTQ community a long way in 50 years there is still much work to be done. LGBTQ people still face many social and political issues, including:

Violence: Violence is especially high against Transgender women of color. At least 22 Transgender people were killed in the United States in 2016, and 10 have died of fatal violence between January and May 2017.

Youth Homelessness: Approximately 40% of homeless young people identify as LGBTQ. In Cincinnati, the Safe and Supported initiative is working against that number.

Public Accommodations: Across the country, bills are being introduced and passed banning Transgender people from using their preferred bathroom or creating religious exemption loopholes to non-discrimination protections.

Discrimination: Although the city’s Human Rights Ordinance includes discrimination protections for LGBTQ people, in Ohio and 28 other states, there are no protections.

Spectrum of Identity: As the LGBTQ community expands, Transgender people, individuals with non-binary gender identities, and many others still have to fight for acceptance of their authentic selves.

Elder Discrimination: As LGBTQ people age, concerns about discrimination in elder care and assisted living facilities must be addressed.

What issues are important to you?

What would you say to the activists who worked for LGBTQ equality?

What do you think the next 50 years will bring for the LGBTQ community?