

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Biden Foundation Announces Advisory Councils Focused on Ending Violence Against Women, Advancing LGBTQ Equality**

*Advisory Councils are composed of diverse experts and advocates in their field*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today, the Biden Foundation announced the formation of two Advisory Councils that will support its work to end violence against women and advance LGBTQ equality. Advisory Council members are respected leaders, experts and advocates at the forefront of their fields, who were chosen to advise the Foundation because they understand the complexities of the broad challenges they aim to address. Recognizing the power of public-private initiatives, they will serve as ambassadors for the Biden Foundation, guiding strategic partnerships to create societal change.

“Jill and I believe that, in America, everyone deserves a fair shot at the American dream. That starts by making sure every person is treated with equal dignity,” said Vice President Biden, Honorary Co-chair of the Biden Foundation. “The members named to the Advisory Councils today have devoted their lives to that creed, and we’re lucky to have them lend their expertise to this mission. By working together, we can do more to protect the rights of all people, expand access to opportunity and give every American a chance at a middle-class life. I am eager for what we will accomplish together.”

“Each of the Advisory Council members has made it their life’s work to protect and advance the rights of the most vulnerable,” said Biden Foundation Executive Director Louisa Terrell. “We’re honored to have them volunteer their knowledge to the Foundation as we work together to build a more just society.”

Members named to the LGBTQ Equality Advisory Council include:

**Cyndi Lauper**, Singer, Songwriter, Actress, Activist; Founder, True Colors Fund

**Sara Ramirez**, Tony Award®-winning Actress and Activist

**Jason Collins**, Professional Basketball Player (retired), National Basketball Association (NBA)

**Sarah McBride**, National Press Secretary, Human Rights Campaign (HRC)

**Phillip Picardi**, Chief Content Officer, *Them* and *Teen Vogue*

**Judy Shepard**, President, Matthew Shepard Foundation

**Evan Wolfson**, Founder and Former President, Freedom to Marry

**Marsha Aizumi**, Author, Speaker, Educator, Advocate Member, PFLAG National Board of Directors

**Dr. Eliza Byard**, Executive Director, Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)  
**Ambassador Michael Guest**, Former U.S. Ambassador to Romania  
**Mara Keisling**, Founder and Executive director, National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE)  
**Dr. Caitlin Ryan**, Director and Co-Founder, Family Acceptance Project  
**Rev. Jasmine Beach-Ferrara**, Founding Executive Director, Campaign for Southern Equality (CSE); Minister, United Church of Christ  
**Jacob Tobia**, Writer, Producer, Author  
**Amit Paley**, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, Trevor Project  
**Precious Davis**, Activist, Educator, Public Speaker

Members named to the Ending Violence Against Women Advisory Council include:

**Justin Baldoni**, Actor, filmmaker and activist  
**Karma Cottman**, Founder, Ujima: The National Center on Violence Against Black Women; Executive Director, DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
**Jess Davidson**, Managing Director, End Rape on Campus  
**Venkayla Haynes**, Regional Advisor, It's On Us  
**Rosie Hidalgo**, Senior Director of Policy, Casa de Esperanza; Senior Advisor, National Resource Center on Domestic Violence  
**Olivia Hinerfeld**, Activist  
**Vivian Huelgo**, Chief Counsel, Task Force on Human Trafficking and Commission on Domestic & Sexual Violence of the American Bar Association  
**Neil Irvin**, Executive Director, Men Can Stop Rape (MCSR)  
**Demetra Lambros**, Appellate attorney, U.S. Department of Justice  
**Zerlina Maxwell**, Director of Progressive Programming, SiriusXM  
**Victoria Nourse**, Professor, Georgetown Law School  
**Nancy Schwartzman**, Director, Producer, Mobile App Developer; CEO, Tech 4 Good  
**Patti Seger**, Executive Director, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin (formerly Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence)  
**Susan B. Sorenson**, Professor, University of Pennsylvania  
**Andrew Sta. Ana**, Director of Legal Services, Day One  
**Ebony Tucker**, Advocacy Director, National Alliance to End Sexual Violence

Advisory Council members will advise Foundation programs, enlist feedback from diverse networks and communities, and spearhead external partnerships on behalf of the Foundation to catalyze meaningful and measurable change. The first meeting of the Advisory Councils will be held by phone at the beginning of 2018, and members are expected to convene in person at least once every year.

See below for statements from a selection of members of the newly formed advisory councils about this new partnership:

“In America, up to 1.6 million youth experience homelessness each year. 40 percent of them identify as LGBTQ, compared to the seven percent of the general youth population

that is LGBTQ. The True Colors Fund is working hard to change that," said **Cyndi Lauper**, co-founder of the True Colors Fund. "As a lifelong ally and advocate, Vice President Biden gets it — and today, I'm proud to join the Biden Foundation as we work to make equality a reality."

"Our diverse backgrounds are what make us unique. The various identities we hold inform how we see, and are seen, in this world," said Tony Award®-winning actress **Sara Ramírez**. "We are all entitled to the same fundamental rights, and to be treated with dignity and respect. We should all have the same opportunities to flourish and thrive. Vice President Biden and I are both committed to advancing the rights of all people, and I'm honored to join the Biden Foundation's advisory council in the fight for equality today."

"I know just how hard it can be to find acceptance — it's something I've struggled with firsthand — but when young people are supported by their families and are empowered to accept themselves, it can mean the world to them," said **Jason Collins**. "Every person has the right to an honest, genuine life regardless of who they are or who they love, and I look forward to working with the Biden Foundation to change the culture so young people no longer have to question whether or not they belong."

"I've worked with Vice President Biden for many years, and we share a passion for engaging men in ending violence against women," said **Neil Irvin**, Executive Director of Men Can Stop Rape. "I'm looking forward to helping to guide the work of the Biden Foundation, especially at this critical time in our national conversation about sexual violence."

"The emotional, physical, and mental cost of sexual assault can be crippling and completely life changing. Many years passed before I was able to tell my own story," said **Venkayla Haynes**, "but working with Vice President Joe Biden and It's On Us helped me find my voice while I was in college — and I was empowered to know I could be a part of the solution by helping marginalized groups and holding institutions and perpetrators accountable. As an advisory council member, I'm eager to pay it forward by guiding the Foundation's work to end gender-based violence."

The Foundation will name Advisory Council members for its other policy areas in the coming year.

### **About the Biden Foundation:**

The Biden Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation established to carry on Vice President and Dr. Biden's lifelong commitment to public service. Through educational programming and public policy analysis, the Foundation works to build a world where all people are equal in dignity and opportunity. For up-to-date information on the Biden Foundation, visit [bidenfoundation.org](https://bidenfoundation.org) or follow the Biden Foundation on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

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