

Department Requesting Code Change:

Columbus City Council

Drafter:

Samuel Duling

Email and Phone:

saduling@columbus.gov; (614) 645-6867

Columbus City Code Title Being Created:

Chapter 177, Sections 177.01 through 177.04

What is the overall purpose of this code change? *Summarize the general themes of the code change(s) and the need for these changes. Please utilize language and descriptors that would be easily understandable by the general public.*

The purpose of this code change is to establish the Columbus LGBTQ+ Affairs Commission. The Commission will serve as an advisory body to both City Council and the Mayor and will be a formal body to guide policymakers through important decisions that affect members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Why is this code change needed? *Examples: Correcting a drafting error; bringing code into alignment with changes to state law. For other policy changes, it may be necessary to provide a much more in-depth rationale in the section.*

LGBTQ+ community members live under heightened scrutiny and face persistent hostility from the Ohio General Assembly, where many bills have been introduced to increase prejudice against such people. Trans youth are especially attacked in Ohio and elsewhere as they have become a scapegoat for rightwing hostility, misinformation, and control; this is evidenced by legislation such as Senate Bill 132, the “Save Women’s Sports Act,” to ban transgender girls from playing on female sports teams. Gender-affirming care for transgender minors has also been prohibited under H.B. 68. Drag performances, too, are under threat, as H.B. 249 has been re-introduced in the General Assembly to prohibit drag performances. The global LGBTQ+ business platform, Out Leadership, ranked Ohio as 39th in the nation for gay and trans safety in 2025; the analysis pointed toward a dramatic escalation in anti-LBGTQ+ legislation from the General Assembly. Members of the community are impacted by such attacks on a daily basis – state law still prohibits same-sex marriage, contrary to the U.S. Supreme Court’s Obergefell decision.

What would be the impact of not adopting this code change?

Members of the LGBTQ+ community do not currently have a formal public body through which to voice their grievances and provide advice to Council and the Mayor. At present, the Mayor informally appoints a liaison to the LGBTQ+ community, and the Dept. of Health employs a liaison. Otherwise, community partners like Stonewall Columbus and Kaleidoscope Youth Center are relied upon for their insights. Establishing this community ensures that the LGBTQ+ community will be organized and represented in an official capacity and subject to requirements like the open meetings law, which will guarantee that this body will be transparent, accountable, and accessible to any community members who wish to be involved.

Are there any operating or capital budget cost/savings implications for this code change?

These may be direct or in-direct, and please also consider long-term impact.

The LGBTQ+ Affairs Commission will be supported by a consultant during its first year, likely up to \$50,000.00, to assist the Commission in drafting a strategic plan to inform its duties. Thereafter, City staff from the Dept. of Neighborhoods, in tandem with Council staff assigned by the Council President, will provide administrative support. In this way, following the first year of the Commission, no ongoing operating or capital budget implications are anticipated.

Describe the community engagement process regarding this code change. What residents, impacted parties, and constituents may be affected? Have they been engaged, and how so? How was their feedback incorporated (or not incorporated) into this code change?

The community engagement process for this Commission will be handled mainly by the aforementioned consultant that will be contracted after the Commission is established. The code language to date has been informed by the City of Cincinnati's recently adopted example, as well as advice from the City Attorney's Office. Upon completion of a strategic plan crafted by the consultant, further code changes or amendments to the Commission's bylaws may be made as necessary.

Will this code change take effect with the ordinance, or is there a delayed effective date?

The ordinance, Ordinance 1412-2025, will take effect 30 days following receipt of the Mayor's signature. The ordinance is anticipated to be considered by Council for second reading on Monday, July 28th, 2025, meaning that it could take effect as soon as the last week of August.