

The Canadian government recently issued a travel advisory to its LGBTQ+ citizens warning against traveling to the United States. A national state of emergency for LGBTQ+ Americans was also issued in June by the group Human Rights Campaign, a US-based advocacy group. State governments have proposed almost 500 proposed anti-trans bills in the US throughout 2023 compared to less than 200 in 2022 (translegislation.com). Although these bills are not all being passed, the direction state governments are taking is clear.

Joanna Schwartz is the first out trans professor to work in the USG and began her transition while working at GC.

“You can’t have that level of animosity in a political environment without having some of it come through to people in general,” said Joanna Schwartz, GC Marketing Professor. “In the country overall there’s been a really heavy conservative legislative push against LGBT people, someone from outside could look at that and see that there really is potentially a large segment of our population no matter what state you’re in who might not respect you as a person and you might not feel safe to travel there.”

The bills being proposed in many Southeastern states are targeted at stripping rights away from the LGBTQ+ community, specifically trans and non-binary people. Georgia is not passing bills at the same rate as Florida or Alabama, but it is only welcoming in some areas and doesn’t have the proper legislation currently in place to offer LGBTQ+ citizens an equal living opportunity throughout the state. Alabama currently only has laws in place protecting LGBTQ+ citizens from basic in-school bullying and from being denied acceptance to colleges within the state due to their gender or sexuality. Florida has more positive laws in place, but also has many laws specifically against the LGBTQ+ community, having passed sodomy laws, HIV/AIDS criminalization laws, as well as laws excluding transgender people from being included in sports or talked about in schools. Georgia currently has similar laws against the LGBTQ+ community as Florida but offer more health care coverage and higher protection of LGBTQ+ youth (hrc.org).

“In comparison to where I was living five years ago [Puerto Rico], I do feel like I’ve found a lot of freedom, I don’t face as much discrimination or harassment,” said Sebastián Emanuelli, senior Liberal Arts major. “In the US there are a lot more rights for LGBTQ+ people, however I do feel like moving to a southern state wasn’t to my advantage... systematically I do receive more protections I believe and I do feel safer here presenting as lesbian, bisexual, trans, whatever in Puerto Rico.”

“The current legislative environment in the United States is still trying to protect our rights,” said Schwartz. “If the country moves really far to the right and the kind of things that are passed in Florida pass nationwide, at that point just as I said I might have to move out of Georgia, it’s perfectly possible I might have to move further than that.”

The United States still offers more protections than many other countries throughout the world. With that said, the US is a historically progressive country where some states are currently working to reduce the rights of some citizens. Legislation is being proposed, and

tracked at [aclu.org](https://www.aclu.org), that directly confronts the ideals of both acceptance and inclusion that the country was founded upon. The LGBTQ+ community needs and deserves respect for their rights.