

Human and Civil Rights Award Winner

◆ Chris Sgro ◆

Virginia Uribe Award for Creative Leadership in Human Rights



Chris Sgro has and continues to be a champion for LGBTQ advocacy. His passion and organizing efforts successfully contributed to policy and legislation seeking to expand the rights of the LGBTQ community in North Carolina and is a model for LGBTQ advocacy everywhere.

In 2016, the North Carolina General Assembly hastily crafted and passed the discriminatory legislation now known across the country as House Bill (HB) 2 - refusing the human rights of transgendered individuals to use the bathroom according to their own gender identification in public facilities. The new law also nullified local ordinances around the state that would have expanded protections for the LGBTQ community. Then the Executive Director of Equality North Carolina, Chris Sgro stepped to the forefront in combatting the legislation. He led work teams of staff and volunteers to launch an impactful communications campaign via local and social media to widely publicize the harmful impact of HB2 on the people, public schools, and economy of North Carolina. He used the message of human rights to advocate for change and galvanize the community for the cause. Equality North Carolina held regional workshops for LGBTQ citizens focused on supporting the community in understanding their rights and how to advocate for them.

Through Sgro's leadership in EqualityNC, and later, his leadership in the General Assembly, after being appointed to an open seat in his home district of Greensboro. He built a powerful coalition that included civil rights leaders, to corporate leaders and the National Basketball Association (NBA). Sgro not only helped to console those who were directly impacted by the Legislature's actions, but also galvanized the fight for LGBTQ citizens to rise up, be heard, and fight back. Ultimately, some of the worst provisions of HB2 were repealed in March 2017. Sgro was one of the strongest voices to defeat it.

When talking about the breadth and lasting impact of Sgro's organizing, Mark D. Jewell, President of the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) said, "He led rallies, marches, sit-ins and hosted trainings for community members, leaders and educators around this issue. He drafted legislation as our State Representative from my home area to not only repeal HB2, but to enact real non-discrimination legislation...He has left a permanent legacy in North Carolina that continues forward through a coalition of over 500 pro-equality business voices and a strong electoral program."

Sgro is a true champion of the fight against discrimination of all people, and in particular, the LGBTQ community. His legacy continues in North Carolina. Most recently, Chris has taken his passion and talents to fight at the national level with the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) where he continues to pave the road for a bright future ahead.