

**SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

February 2, 2024

Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board  
1025 Union Avenue SE  
Olympia, WA 98501



**Washington**

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**Re: *Recent Enforcement Actions Against LGBTQIA2S+ Establishments***

Dear Liquor and Cannabis Board –

We write to express our concern regarding last weekend’s enforcement actions conducted on several LGBTQIA2S+ bars in Seattle—actions that are reminiscent of a long history of disproportionate law enforcement in establishments that serve the queer and transgender community. We applaud your swift response to the outpouring of anger voiced by those impacted by the enforcement actions—bar owners, patrons, and the greater community that experienced the ripple effect of the weekend’s events. We ask that you continue your dedication to the queer and transgender community by upholding the promises of your recent letter to the governor.

Bars and night clubs are an important gathering place for the queer and transgender community—both historically and today. These spaces provide safety that is often lacking in the outside world, where people can be themselves and express their identities. Yet, these spaces have continually been subjected to police action and state violence. From the 1966 police violence at San Francisco’s Compton’s Cafeteria—a well-known gathering space for transgender women of color—to the infamous police raids at New York City’s Stonewall Inn three years later, the security of queer and trans spaces has been breached time and time again.

The LGBTQIA2S+ community carries with it this harmful legacy of police and state violence. While the events of Stonewall may be 50 years old, today’s onslaught of anti-LGBTQIA2S+ legislation and rhetoric leaves queer and trans people experiencing profound fear and worry—for themselves, their families, and their community. It is against this backdrop that the queer and trans community experiences the LCB’s recent enforcement actions—actions which have understandably been described as raids—in Seattle’s historically queer Capitol Hill neighborhood.

The ACLU of Washington fully supports the activism and organizing we have witnessed over the past days from the queer and trans community. They have made their demands clear—the LCB must immediately cease lewd conduct enforcement, permanently end participation with the Seattle’s

Joint Enforcement Task Force, and decline to issue citations from last weekend's enforcement action.

Outdated lewd conduct laws not only fail to reflect current norms and values but are not routinely enforced. The disparate enforcement of lewd conduct laws on marginalized communities, particularly the LGBTQIA2S+ community which has a history of targeting under such laws, must not be tolerated. The introduction of police into queer and trans spaces to support routine LCB enforcement further amplifies this community's history of police violence within their important community spaces. The LCB can continue its routine enforcement practices without the Seattle Police Department.

The ACLU of Washington supports the community's response and demands. We further ask that the LCB upholds the privacy of the patrons of each establishment impacted by the weekend's enforcement action—particularly individuals who were photographed during the enforcement. Taking photographs of individuals in queer spaces breaches their personal autonomy and privacy, and further may risk endangering their livelihood and wellness.

We thank you for your urgent attention to the community after these enforcement actions. We urge you to continue your commitments to the LGBTQIA2S+ community in order to “be better” and create fair and equitable liquor enforcement practices.

Sincerely,  
s/ Adrien Leavitt  
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