

IRE Board Vote by Email | May 11, 2023

Statement Supporting LGBTQ+ Community Ahead of IRE Conference in Orlando

On May 9, 2023, IRE Board President Mark Walker consulted Executive Committee members via email, asking for input on a proposed statement regarding the LGBTQ+ community ahead of the organization's national conference in Orlando in June.

Walker indicated some IRE members had recently expressed safety concerns following the passage of restrictive legislation in Florida. The proposal's language he sent for review was based on a similar statement regarding discrimination against - and safety concerns from - the LGBTQ+ community ahead of the NICAR Conference in Nashville in March following restrictive legislation passed in Tennessee.

Executive Committee members all gave initial approval for the new statement, and Secretary Josh Hinkle suggested Walker consult with Diversity Committee Chair Barbara Rodriguez for additional input before sending it to the full board. On May 11, Walker told Executive Committee members he had consulted Rodriguez, who gave her approval of the statement.

That same day, Walker made a motion to the full board via email to approve and publish the statement ahead of the IRE Conference in June. Hinkle seconded the motion via email. The motion received unanimous approval of directors (11-0) who voted before the statement was posted later that day (it required only a majority, and timeliness was a factor).

The following directors voted "yes" on May 11 to approve the motion via email: Darla Cameron, Jodie Fleischer, Cindy Galli, Josh Hinkle, Kate Howard, Barbara Rodriguez, Brian Rosenthal, Neena Satija, Lam Thuy Vo, Mark Walker and Simone Weichselbaum. Directors Mark Greenblatt and Aaron Kessler voted "yes" via email later that same day after the statement was posted.

The approved statement is below (and posted on IRE's website and social media outlets):

Today, the IRE Board of Directors issued the following statement:

IRE is committed to maintaining a safe environment where all our members can learn and be supported professionally. We believe all discrimination is damaging, including discrimination based on gender identity or expression.

Recently, some of our members have expressed concern about their safety, especially in light of new legislation in Florida aimed at the LGBTQ+ community passed this year.

The law affects government buildings, schools and jails. It does not apply to hotels or any of the facilities IRE will be using for events surrounding IRE 2023 in Orlando in June.

We want to reiterate that we will do everything we can to ensure all attendees are supported and protected. If anybody feels unsafe during the conference, they should seek out an IRE staff member or board member for assistance. They are there to help. IRE also has a Code of Conduct to address complaints of discriminatory or harassing behavior. We encourage members to reach out to the IRE board or executive director with further questions. Please review the organization's recent DEI initiatives for additional details.

There are LGBTQ+ journalists in Florida who are IRE members, colleagues and friends – and we support them. We will be there in Orlando to do just that. We will be more than 1,000 strong in Orlando, and we are proud to show where we stand – for the LGBTQ+ community and journalists everywhere.