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Erica Barz – One Iowa
319-269-2676
erica@oneiowa.org

Drew Anderson – GLAAD
765-432-3231
danderson@glaad.org

GLAAD Joins One Iowa, The Gazette, and The Advocate as National Partner for Presidential Candidate Forum on LGBTQ Issues

2020 candidates Joe Biden, Julian Castro, Joe Sestak, and Marianne Williamson have confirmed attendance

LGBTQ forum will be livestreamed from Cedar Rapids, Iowa to a national audience on Sept. 20 and will exclusively feature questions on LGBTQ-specific issues

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA – GLAAD, the world’s largest LGBTQ media advocacy organization, today announced that it will join One Iowa, *The Gazette*, and *The Advocate* as national partners for the upcoming LGBTQ Presidential Forum in Cedar Rapids, Iowa on September 20, 2019.

The Forum will take place at Coe College’s Sinclair Auditorium in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and will be livestreamed through GLAAD’s partnership across social and digital channels to a national and international audience. Further details about access to the livestream, RSVP logistics, and additional commitments from other 2020 presidential candidates are forthcoming.

The partnership for the forum grew as the 2020 presidential election cycle continues and LGBTQ issues have been largely absent on the national debate stage. LGBTQ Americans have faced more than 124 anti-LGBTQ attacks in policy and rhetoric from a hostile Trump Administration, including the president’s ban on transgender Americans from serving in the nation’s armed forces and opposition to the Equality Act. Combined with recent research from [GLAAD and The Harris Poll](#) suggesting a decline in LGBTQ acceptance among younger Americans, the LGBTQ vote will shape the upcoming 2020 elections.

To date in the 2020 presidential primary, LGBTQ issues have largely been absent on the national debate stage, with only a fraction of candidates mentioning the LGBTQ community and the issues affecting their lives. Exit polls from the 2018 midterm elections revealed LGBTQ voters represented about six percent of the electorate, making LGBTQ Americans an influential voting bloc in the crowded 2020 presidential primary contests.

“LGBTQ issues and the LGBTQ community have been largely left out of the 2020 presidential primary conversation so far, and this forum will bring these important topics to a national audience for the first time in this election cycle,” **said Sarah Kate Ellis, President and CEO of GLAAD.** “We look forward to hearing how each 2020 candidate will fight for LGBTQ acceptance during this campaign and beyond and, as President, how each of them would repair the damage done to LGBTQ equality and acceptance by the Trump Administration.”

“We’re excited to have GLAAD on board as we shine a light on the lives and needs of LGBTQ people living in the heartland,” **said One Iowa Interim Executive Director Courtney Reyes.** “The overarching narrative that LGBTQ people in the U.S live in urban coastal areas ignores the millions of LGBTQ individuals living and working in the middle of the country. We look forward to hearing what the presidential candidates have to say to this often overlooked, but politically powerful community.”

“At *The Advocate*, we are committed to serving LGBTQ populations living in big cities and small towns with vital news and information to educate, inform and inspire,” **said Zach Stafford, The Advocate editor-in-chief.** “Creating a forum where our issues are front and center will allow the LGBTQ community to make clear and informed decisions about the candidates seeking our valuable votes.”

Currently, confirmed attendees include Former Vice President Joe Biden, former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julian Castro, former Pennsylvania representative Joe Sestak, and author Marianne Williamson. All presidential candidates will lay out their vision on how they will protect and improve LGBTQ acceptance – including in the heartland and across rural America. All Democratic presidential candidates actively campaigning in Iowa have been invited to participate.

One Iowa, a statewide LGBTQ advocacy organization, *The Gazette*, Eastern Iowa’s daily newspaper and online news source, and *The Advocate*, the world’s leading source for LGBTQ news previously announced the LGBTQ forum is free to the public with required pre-registration. More than 350 people have RSVP’d, and additional tickets are available at www.thegazette.com/2019LGBTQforum or by calling 319-398-8345.

Several leading elected officials from Eastern Iowa are serving as honorary co-chairs for the LGBTQ Presidential Forum:

- Abby Finkenauer, U.S. Congressman (IA-1)
- Dave Loebsack, U.S. Congressman (IA-2)

- Zach Wahls, Iowa State Senator
- Rob Hogg, Iowa State Senator
- Liz Bennett, Iowa State Representative
- Kyla Paterson, Chair of the Iowa Democratic Party Stonewall Caucus
- Bret Niles, Chair of the Linn County Democratic Party
- Aime Wichtendahl, Hiawatha City Councilwoman

Doors will open at 6:15 p.m., and the program will run from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Each candidate will have individual stage time to address the audience, followed by a one-on-one moderated Q&A session. Moderators are:

- Lyz Lenz, *The Gazette* columnist
- Zach Stafford, *The Advocate* editor-in-chief
- Keenan Crow, One Iowa director of policy and advocacy

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One Iowa advances, empowers, and improves the lives of LGBTQ Iowans statewide. Find out more at www.oneiowa.org.

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The Gazette is Eastern Iowa's independent, employee-owned daily newspaper and media company. Founded in 1883, the company continues to be innovative in program, product and service while maintaining its commitment to provide the latest in local, state and national news. Find out more at www.thegazette.com.

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The Advocate continues to be the world's leading source of LGBTQ+ news, culture and entertainment, since it was first published over half a century ago in 1967. Through its award-winning journalism, compelling photography, and impactful video, The Advocate continues to capture the most important political and culturally relevant news and conversations taking place today, that affect the LGBTQ+ community and beyond. Find out more at www.advocate.com.

GLAAD rewrites the script for LGBTQ acceptance. As a dynamic media force, GLAAD tackles tough issues to shape the narrative and provoke dialogue that leads to cultural change. GLAAD protects all that has been accomplished and creates a world where everyone can live the life they love. For more information, please visit www.glaad.org or connect with GLAAD on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).