

# The Pennsylvania Youth Congress Assembly Charter

## *Adopted 2020*

### **Preamble**

We accept the following statement of purpose, first adopted at the Pennsylvania Youth Congress Constitutional Convention in Harrisburg on August 6, 2011, as the basis for our action:

We affirm ourselves for social justice. Through non-violence, courage displaces fear, love transforms hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice; hope ends despair. Peace dominates war; faith reconciles doubt. Mutual regards cancels enmity. Justice for all overcomes injustice. The redemptive community supersedes systems of gross social immorality.

Love is the central motif of social justice. Love is the force by which we bind ourselves to Pennsylvania and to each other. Such love goes to the extreme; it remains loving and forgiving even in the midst of hostility. It matches the capacity of hate to inflict suffering with an even more enduring capacity to absorb hate, all the while persisting in love.

By appealing to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, we affirm our work to nurture an atmosphere in which reconciliation and equality become possibilities.

-Adapted from The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Constitution (1962)

### **Article I: Name and Purpose**

1. The PYC Assembly represents the foundation the Pennsylvania Youth Congress and is manifested through its leadership of PYC Advocates.
2. The mission of the PYC Assembly is to provide a platform of coordination and mobilization for young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) Pennsylvanians to successfully create positive change toward social, racial, gender, and economic justice. As part of a broader social justice movement, the PYC Assembly works towards Pennsylvania becoming a commonwealth that respects the diversity of human expression and identity which provides opportunity for all.
3. The PYC Assembly's mission will be achieved by:
  - a. Building a community of young LGBTQ+ Pennsylvanians who share an interest in the empowerment of young people-led organizing;
  - b. Facilitating collaboration between PYC Advocates, PYC Member Organizations, and community partners;
  - c. Promoting and ensuring positive social change by increasing civic engagement of young LGBTQ+ advocates in Pennsylvania; and,
  - d. Being inclusive of all forms of human identity and expression.
4. The PYC Assembly embraces political nonpartisanship.

5. The PYC Assembly shall have the ability to recommend the initiation of programs in areas where none presently exists, and to work closely with local organizations in the intensification and extension of the movement, in coordination with all leaders within PYC.
6. PYC Advocates of the PYC Assembly shall hold four statewide gatherings each year. The gatherings shall be held for PYC Advocates to engage in movement development, evaluate current efforts, receive advanced training, and design future actions for Pennsylvania LGBTQ+ movements. In addition, PYC Advocates shall be available to assist regions in holding their own gatherings, providing both personnel and financial assistance.
7. The PYC Assembly shall operate across the entire commonwealth of Pennsylvania in designated regions. PYC Advocates shall have the power to redraw, add, or remove regions with a resolution of a five-sixth (5/6) majority of PYC Advocates. The nine PYC Assembly Regions are:
  - a. Central Pennsylvania
    - i. Comprised of Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry and York Counties
  - b. Delaware Valley
    - i. Comprised of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery Counties
  - c. Erie-West
    - i. Comprised of Crawford, Erie, Forest, McKean, Mercer, Venango, and Warren Counties
  - d. Greater Pittsburgh
    - i. Comprised of Allegheny County
  - e. Lehigh Valley
    - i. Comprised of Berks Carbon, Lehigh, southern Monroe, Northampton and Schuylkill Counties
  - f. North Central Pennsylvania
    - i. Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Elk, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lycoming, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Somerset, Snyder, Tioga, and Union Counties
  - g. Northeastern Pennsylvania
    - i. Comprised of Bradford, Lackawanna, Luzerne, northern Monroe, Pike, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Wayne, Wyoming
  - h. Philadelphia
    - i. Comprised of the City and County of Philadelphia
  - i. Southwestern Pennsylvania
    - i. Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Clarion, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Jefferson, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland Counties

## **Article II. The Foundation of the PYC Assembly**

1. Upon application, PYC Advocates shall have the power to grant membership to local youth-led LGBTQ+ organizations in Pennsylvania that meet the following criteria:
  - a. The organization identifies as one primarily comprised of young LGBTQ+ Pennsylvanians;
  - b. The organization consists of not less than ten (10) active members;
  - c. The organization is fully committed to the independent empowerment of young advocates, nonviolence, and the mission of PYC;
  - d. The organization's leadership has demonstrated its intention to actively pursue the objectives set out in the Preamble;
  - e. The organization has the membership and support required to function effectively and for the foreseeable future as an association; and,
  - f. The organization firmly commits to anti-racism, economic justice, gender justice, and the ending of oppression and bigotry in all its forms, including anti-Blackness, ableism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia.
2. The affiliation of PYC Member Organizations shall be perpetual, subject to the provisions of this Charter.
3. All rights, privileges, and obligations of being a PYC Member Organization are held wholly and exclusively by the member organization, cannot be transferred to another organization, and terminate upon the cessation of membership.
4. The responsibilities of PYC, including its personnel and PYC Advocates, towards PYC Member Organizations shall include the following:
  - a. PYC recognizes that PYC Member Organizations are autonomous and it shall consider them the primary expression of LGBTQ+ youth movements in a given area;
  - b. PYC Member Organizations may expect visits and assistance from PYC Advocates and personnel as a regular occurrence;
  - c. PYC shall provide a directory listing of PYC Member Organizations and PYC Advocates on an annual basis to each PYC Member Organization;
  - d. PYC Advocates and personnel shall be available to lend assistance to PYC Member Organizations. Such visits may be brief or at times personnel may be assigned upon request of the PYC Member Organization to work with a particular program on an extended basis; and,
  - e. PYC Member Organizations may be eligible for personnel or financial assistance from PYC. Ongoing commitments must be cleared through the PYC Advocates and the PYC Foundation Board of Directors, but emergency situations will be handled by PYC personnel. All allocations shall be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.
5. The responsibilities of PYC Member Organizations to PYC shall include the following:
  - a. Each PYC Member Organization shall assign an approved Delegate on an annual basis to represent their interests in communications or meetings within PYC operations.

- i. All executive board members of a PYC Member Organization, as defined by the member organization's constitution, or generally accepted practice in the absence of an official constitution, are considered approved.
  - ii. If the assigned Delegate does not serve on the executive board of the member organization, written notice from an executive board member of the organization must be received by the appropriate PYC personnel regarding the individual being considered approved.
    - 1. By choosing to be represented by a non-executive-board-member, the organization's leadership recognizes that it will honor communications made by that representative on its behalf during any meetings or activities for which the representative is approved.
  - iii. Each PYC Member Organization shall provide updated contact information for their organization, executive board members, and Delegate to the appropriate PYC personnel on at least an annual basis.
  - iv. No individual shall be allowed to represent more than one (1) PYC Member Organization.
  - v. PYC Advocates shall not be eligible to be a Delegate for a PYC Member Organization.
- b. PYC Member Organizations shall give every consideration to cooperate with statewide or area-wide projects directed or in collaboration with PYC Advocates.
  - c. PYC Member Organizations are encouraged to task their Delegate, or to appoint a member, or members, within their organization to be responsible for supplying PYC Advocates throughout the year with up-to-date information regarding activities in their region. PYC Advocates or personnel shall in turn supply the leadership of each Member Organization with news of events and activities in other areas.
6. A PYC Member Organization's membership shall only be terminated if:
- a. The PYC Member Organization resigns its membership in writing to the Chair of PYC Advocates and the executive leader of PYC personnel, signed by a majority of its executive board then in office;
  - b. The PYC Member Organization ceases to exist as a group; or,
    - i. Which shall be determined upon PYC Advocates receiving confirmation by an organization's chartering institution, such as a college or university, if applicable, that the organization has ceased operations and dissolved, and has been removed from its active records.
  - c. The PYC Member Organization is removed by PYC Advocates as outlined in Article IV §4.

### **Article III. Annual Meeting**

- 1. PYC Advocates may call an Annual Meeting by resolution. The Annual Meeting shall be comprised of PYC Advocates and Delegates of PYC Member Organizations, and is open to all leaders of PYC Member Organizations.

2. The Annual Meeting invites discussion and updates on matters of statewide importance to LGBTQ+ Pennsylvanians and the issuance of resolutions on advocacy agendas and calls to action.
3. Notice of the date, time, and place of the Annual Meeting must be sent to each Delegate with at least two (2) weeks' notice before the gathering is to begin, as well as instructions on how to attend the meeting virtually or by phone.
4. The presiding convener of the Annual Meeting shall be the Chair of PYC Advocates. The Vice-Chair of PYC Advocates shall record the minutes of the Annual Meeting and provide them for distribution to PYC Member Organizations following the meeting.
5. The Annual Meeting shall formally recognize the Delegate of each PYC Member Organization, as well as additional members of their organizations.
  - a. Only Delegates may introduce and vote on motions.
2. There shall be no set quorum required for an Annual Meeting to take place. The passage of a resolution shall only require a simple majority of the Delegates present.
6. PYC Advocates in coordination with PYC personnel shall present PYC Member Organizations with an annual report of activities during the Annual Meeting.

#### **Article IV. The Organization of PYC Assembly Leadership**

1. The coordination team of the PYC Assembly shall be PYC Advocates.
2. Applications for PYC Advocates shall be received by PYC personnel during each designated annual open recruitment period. PYC personnel shall process each application and distribute a list of validated candidates to PYC Advocates for approval. PYC Advocates shall be approved for a term of one year. Terms are renewable when indicated by the PYC Advocate before the end of the annual open recruitment period. PYC Advocates shall continue to serve until their replacement is approved.
3. Young Pennsylvanians shall be eligible to become PYC Advocates should they meet the following criteria:
  - a. Identify as a young leader in LGBTQ+ communities;
  - b. Express a full commitment to the independent empowerment of young advocates, nonviolence, and the mission of PYC;
  - c. Demonstrate high energy, positive attitudes, and passion about issues impacting young LGBTQ+ individuals, as well as a proactive work ethic, flexibility, teamwork skills, and attention to detail – and a high degree of initiative;
  - d. Utilize strong communication skills and an ability to write clearly and persuasively; and,
  - e. Firmly commit to anti-racism, economic justice, and the ending of oppression in all its forms.
3. Up to three (3) PYC Advocates may be appointed for each PYC Assembly Region, or up to five (5) for a given year upon a motion by PYC Advocates.
4. PYC Advocates shall:
  - a. Be empowered to utilize PYC as a platform for advocacy work and community building.

- b. Represent PYC to their local communities, the general public, student and youth leaders, government officials, and the media.
  - c. Help set and guide the advocacy agenda for PYC.
  - d. Provide oversight for the general operations of PYC.
  - e. Be empowered to convene regional meetings which invite Delegates, leaders, and members of PYC Member Organizations from their region.
  - f. Network and organize activities or advocacy campaigns in collaboration with member organizations located within their region;
    - i. These activities may include joint programming, events, or advocacy efforts.
  - g. Promote positive communication and healthy relationships between PYC and PYC Member Organizations in their region; and
  - h. Plan and support strategic development to enhance the quality and capacity of civic engagement of LGBTQ+ youth in their region through PYC.
  - i. Adhere to reasonable participation expectations issued by PYC personnel, and communicate clearly with PYC personnel should there be any reason for an emergency absence or temporary withdrawal of participation.
5. All rights, privileges, and obligations of being a PYC Advocate are held wholly and exclusively by the individual, cannot be transferred to another individual, and terminate upon resignation or completion of their term.
  - a. A PYC Advocate may resign in writing to the Chair of PYC Advocates and the executive leader of PYC personnel.
  - b. In the event of a PYC Advocate vacancy, PYC personnel shall work with the Chair of PYC Advocates to appoint eligible individuals serve the remainder of the term.
  - c. PYC personnel may remove a PYC Advocate for misconduct upon notice to the PYC Foundation Board of Directors.
6. At the beginning of each annual term of PYC Advocates, the PYC Advocates shall elect a Chair and Vice-Chair among the PYC Advocates, to serve until the completion of the annual term of PYC Advocates, in an election facilitated by PYC personnel.
  - a. Outside of facilitating an Executive Meeting of PYC Advocate or PYC Annual Meeting, the Chair and Vice-Chair of PYC Advocates shall be regarded as equal in responsibility and recognition with other PYC Advocates.
  - b. The Vice-Chair of PYC Advocates shall assume the responsibilities of the Chair of PYC Advocates if the Chair of PYC Advocates becomes incapacitated or resigns. Should a vacancy occur in either role, PYC Advocates may hold an election facilitated by PYC personnel.
  - c. The Chair and Vice-Chair of PYC Advocates shall serve in their roles concurrent with their terms as PYC Advocates.
7. An Executive Meeting of PYC Advocates may be called by the Chair of PYC Advocates or upon a petition of The Chair of PYC Advocates or upon a petition of one-third (1/3) of PYC Advocates with a one (1) week advance notice of the meeting's date, time, and place, and instructions on how to attend the meeting virtually or by phone. This shall be a group-centered

meeting which is authorized to propose and ratify resolutions furthering the mission of PYC and the PYC Assembly.

- a. The Chair of PYC Advocates shall preside over formally called Executive Meetings of the PYC Advocates.
    - i. It shall be the responsibility of the Chair of PYC Advocates set and distribute in advance the agenda of a meeting.
    - ii. The Vice-Chair of PYC Advocates shall be responsible for recording the minutes of an Executive Meeting of PYC Advocate.
  - b. Quorum to hold an Executive Meeting of PYC Advocates shall consist of a simple majority of the PYC Advocates.
  - c. During an Executive Meeting of PYC Advocates, PYC Advocates may take action on a motion with a simple majority of the members present.
    - i. All votes of PYC Advocates are to be by open vote unless otherwise determined to be a closed vote.
      1. PYC Advocates may elect to have a closed vote by the consent of three-fourths of PYC Advocates present. The closed vote shall be tallied by the Chair and Vice-Chair of PYC Advocates.
      2. One-tenth of the PYC Advocates present may demand and shall receive a recount of all ballots in a closed vote.
  - d. Minutes of an Executive Meeting of PYC Advocates meetings shall be promptly sent to all PYC Advocates, be made available to member organizations, and securely archived with PYC personnel.
    - i. If PYC Advocates deem the minutes from any meeting to be sensitive, in whole or in part, distribution of the documentation may be limited at their discretion but archived in full with PYC personnel.
8. The affiliation status of all PYC Member Organizations may be reviewed at any time at the discretion of PYC Advocates.
- a. PYC Advocates have the power to remove a PYC Member Organization from the PYC Assembly due to an inability to function as an organization because of a lack of support or membership, negligence, disloyalty, incompetence in organizational business, willfully violating its own constitution, explicit acts of bigotry, such as racism or transphobia, or deliberately impeding the progress of PYC's mission.
  - b. A PYC Membership Organization must be promptly notified if an affiliation review has been initiated on their organization and alerted no less than seven (7) days in advance of an Executive Meeting of PYC Advocates to be held which would include the consideration of any resolution impacting their membership status.
  - c. The executive board members of the PYC Member Organization in question shall have the opportunity to defend their affiliation status at the Executive Meeting of PYC Advocates when their membership is evaluated. Full rights of due process are conferred on the respondents.
  - d. The Executive Meeting of PYC Advocates shall provide a deliberations period in which only PYC Advocates may remain, and the assent of two-thirds (2/3) of the total

number of PYC Advocates shall be necessary for any disciplinary action, up to and including removal.

9. PYC Advocates may establish subcommittees amongst themselves as it deems necessary and proper to carry out its work.
  - a. No subcommittee shall be created without a specification of the subcommittee's membership, terms of reference, tenure, and official capacity with respect to PYC Advocates and PYC Member Organizations.
10. PYC personnel are an independent function of PYC operations under the direction of the PYC Foundation Board of Directors.
  - a. The personnel shall be responsible for executing PYC activities, working with the direction of PYC Advocates.
  - b. The head of the staff shall be an Executive Director, or Co-Directors, who shall be responsible for the day-to-day operation of PYC and the supervision for all other personnel.
  - c. PYC Advocates may recommend the employment whatever personnel it understands to be necessary for the operation of the organization.
  - d. The employed personnel, whether compensated or volunteers, shall be considered part of the PYC Assembly and shall have the right to voice but not to vote in either an Executive Meeting or Annual Meeting.

#### **Article V. Finances**

1. PYC Advocates are welcome to undertake reasonable fundraising efforts to support PYC as an organization, which can be allocated by the PYC Foundation Board of Directors for specific efforts led by PYC Advocates or the general PYC Assembly. PYC Advocates must be authorized by the appropriate PYC personnel to solicit donations in compliance with federal and state law.
2. Efforts shall be made to encourage ways in which PYC Member Organizations may contribute to PYC.
3. PYC shall share the organization's annual budget for consultation with PYC Advocates on an annual basis.

#### **Article VI: The PYC Assembly Charter**

1. This Charter shall be the original basis for action for the PYC Assembly.
2. Proposals to amend this Charter may be made by petition of two-thirds of PYC Advocates to the PYC Foundation Board of Directors for final approval.

WE are young advocates from across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and accept this Charter as the united foundation of our action as the PYC Assembly.