



**ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT BY
FORMER EQUALITY PA LEADER JOHN DAWE COME TO LIGHT
PYC SUCCESSFULLY DEMANDS IMMEDIATE RESIGNATION OF
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF EQUALITY PENNSYLVANIA**

KINGSTON, Pa. — The Pennsylvania Youth Congress is coming forward to share recent developments related to former Interim Executive Director of Equality Pennsylvania John Dawe.

On August 2, 2018, PYC delivered a letter demanding the immediate resignation of John Dawe, then Interim Executive Director of Equality Pennsylvania, and an additional letter to the Equality Pennsylvania Board of Directors urging the same. Dawe agreed to an immediate resignation.

In late June, allegations of sexual assault of vulnerable young individuals over whom Dawe had significant organizational and political power were shared with PYC, in addition to a past criminal record. The leadership of PYC decided it was important to intervene to address the alleged predatory behavior in order to ensure the safety of all those in organizations or shared community spaces who place their trust in those with authority and power.

Founded in 1996 as the Center for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Philadelphia, Equality Pennsylvania is a non-profit organization that aims to advocate for the civil rights of LGBT Pennsylvanians. Dawe began serving as a Board member of Equality Pennsylvania in 2012. He became a development consultant for the organization in 2016 and had served as the Interim Executive Director of the organization since July 2017.

In 2003, Dawe was charged with 15 third degree felony counts of sexual abuse of children for possession of child pornography, along with eight counts of unlawful use of a computer and three counts of receiving stolen property related to unlawfully accessing and downloading Mansfield University of Pennsylvania database information, ultimately pleading guilty to one count of endangering the welfare of a child and one count of receiving stolen property. This history is available in public court records.

At the time of Dawe's sentencing in 2003, President Judge Robert E. Dalton Jr. defended his decision not to incarcerate Dawe by stating, "You do not seem like the type of person who would do this again."

In 2009 in Luzerne County, he allegedly shared inappropriate imagery of a sexual nature to a male employee at web.com (formerly Solid Cactus), which was reported to Human Resources and he was immediately terminated. One recent incident of alleged repeated sexual assault occurred in 2015 in Philadelphia involving a subordinate male employee for a non-profit based in the Wilkes-Barre area. This individual was then 22 years old. He said, "This made me afraid. I didn't report it for months because I was afraid I might lose my job. It was my first job out of college and I was sure if I said anything, I would lose my job due to lack of experience. He was my direct supervisor and had power over my job, pay, and hours. I saw how when he used that power on other people to make them lose their jobs, and I was absolutely terrified."

Later in 2015 in Luzerne County, a young community leader has alleged repeated sexual assault over two weeks. Dawe allegedly harassed him for months following to pressure him into additional sexual activities. PYC has obtained screenshots of text messages sent by Dawe corroborating these events.

Sexual assault exists in every community across every identity group. No matter a perpetrators background, they must be held accountable for their actions. Dawe's alleged behavior is not exclusive of or specific to the LGBTQ community and should not be treated as such.

"There is no safe harbor in the LGBTQ community for those perpetrating sexual assault. There is no place for anyone who uses their power to manipulate and abuse those who are most vulnerable, especially when their vulnerability is used to mask the perpetrators' guilt," said Jason Landau Goodman, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Youth Congress.

The Pennsylvania Youth Congress letter to Equality Pennsylvania included the following demands

- Pursue an investigation regarding his conduct while at Equality Pennsylvania
- Issue a press statement being accountable to his harm and an apology to the community and his victims
- A full vetting of current members and future members for Equality Pennsylvania's Boards of Directors

Simultaneously on August 2, 2018, PYC ensured all testimonies and materials it had received at the time by those coming forward with their allegations of sexual assault by Dawe were given to the local Kingston police and Pennsylvania State Police – Wyoming.

On August 9, 2018, the Equality Pennsylvania Board of Directors sent a letter to PYC indicating that it has begun an internal investigation into these matters and requested PYC share information with them on the allegations. On August 22, 2018, Equality Pennsylvania posted a public statement on its Facebook page acknowledging his immediate resignation and stating that "We are investigating the complaints made against Mr. Dawe, in cooperation with legal counsel. Out of respect for the privacy of the complaintants and the integrity of the ongoing investigation we cannot comment on the details of the allegations at this time." On August 25, 2018, PYC shared the testimonies and additional documentation with Equality Pennsylvania.

PYC has remained committed to accountability in this process. Over the past two months, Equality Pennsylvania has acknowledged that an investigation is ongoing and has communicated that it is unable to further comment to PYC. At this time, PYC feels it has a duty to ensure that this information was now made public in order to help protect any individual in the future from harm. PYC was ready to proceed with a public statement in August but was waiting for the conclusion of the Equality Pennsylvania investigation, which continues to remain ongoing.

Landau Goodman added that PYC "wants to ensure the message is loud and clear to young gay men, and all LGBTQ youth, that we believe you. There is no shame in being a male survivor. In response to any incident of sexual violence, our larger LGBTQ communities should support transparency and accountability."

For any individual impacted by sexual violence, we encourage you to reach out for help and resources. The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR) provides help, hope and healing to survivors of sexual harassment, abuse, and assault and their families. Your local rape crisis center, which can be reached by calling 1-888-772-7227, can provide free and confidential counseling, court assistance and more. Visit pcar.org to learn more.

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The Pennsylvania Youth Congress advances freedom and justice for young LGBTQ Pennsylvanians through advocating for responsible public policy. As a youth-led organization, PYC represents citizens working toward safer schools and thriving communities across the commonwealth.

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