

CRAIN'S CLEVELAND BUSINESS

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Porter Wright launches LGBTQ+ business practice group



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Finance/Legal

The new group is led by members and allies of the LGBTQ+ community who are positioning themselves as a special resource for LGBTQ+ business owners.

Amid what has been declared LGBTQ+ Pride Month, Columbus-based law firm Porter Wright has [launched](#) an LGBTQ+ business practice group — a seemingly unique area of focus for firms in the Ohio market at least.

The firm, which according to the [2020 Crain's law firms list](#) has at least 14 attorneys stationed in the Cleveland market, said attorneys in the practice group will "work with business owners in a wealth of areas to help their businesses succeed."

"LGBTQ+ business owners often face unique challenges when doing business," said Ted Walters, co-chair of the group, in a statement. "The attorneys in our group are members and allies of the LGBTQ+ community and bring the experience, understanding and authenticity to partner with our clients to help them achieve their goals."

The group will work on business formation, securing LGBT Business Enterprise certification and a host of other general business services geared toward LGBT firms and their operators.

"We recognized the need for this type of cross-disciplinary group to support LGBTQ+ businesses in all of our markets in Ohio, Florida, Chicago, Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C.," added co-chair Ron Hicks. "Regardless of location, industry, stage of business or corporate structure, we will work with LGBTQ+ business owners to enable a path that avoids challenges, minimizes risk and leverages opportunity."

While it's unclear how many LGBT-oriented practice groups may exist at other firms in the legal field, Porter Wright's is "proof positive that LGBT issues are moving the diversity needle in a measurable way," said D'Arcy Kemnitz, executive director of the [National LGBT Bar Association and Foundation](#) in Washington, D.C.

She heralded the announcement as "remarkably good news" for the Ohio market and a notable development in terms of promoting diversity in the profession, which is something more companies are looking for in the firms with which they do business.

"Attorneys who are out and proud as self-identified members of the LGBTQ+ community and those who are vocal straight and trans allies practice in firms across the nation — not only on the coasts," Kemnitz said via email. "And — we mean business, business development — as you see firms embracing the LGBTQ+ legal market. After all, clients demand their outside legal professionals are diverse. In fact, at this year's Annual Conference and Career Fair, Lavender Law, we already have over 160 firms seeking LGBTQ+ legal talent to answer that demand."

"Yet, we still have a long way to go," she added.

On the diversity front, Porter Wright says it is "Mansfield Rule Certified" and "Mansfield Certified Plus" for exceeding benchmarks in the national diversity, equity and inclusion program aimed at better recruitment, retention and promotion of underrepresented groups.

The firm also has an employee resource group dubbed the "Equality Alliance" that focuses on outreach to the LGBTQ+ community, internal policies and procedures, professional and business development, and recruitment and retention among attorneys and staff.

You can find out more about Porter Wright's new LGBT business practice group [via its website here](#).

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Inline Play

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