



The voice of the LGBTQ military and veteran community



Cathy Marcello- Assistant Director of Programs at Modern Military Association of America



Cathy Marcello serves as the Assistant Director of Programs at the Modern Military Association of America (MMAA), the nation's largest organization dedicated to the LGBTQ+ and HIV-positive military community. MMAA's crucial advocacy supports service members, veterans, and their families, especially those navigating the complexities of military life while being part of the LGBTQ+ community. Marcello, with a personal connection as an army brat, spouse, and parent to a transgender child, embodies the organization's mission, driven by a personal commitment to effect change.

MMAA has played a pivotal role in supporting LGBTQ+ and HIV-positive individuals in the military since 1993, evolving through the merger of four foundational organizations. These organizations collectively have advanced the rights and well-being of countless service members and veterans, reflecting its dedication to fighting discrimination and promoting inclusivity.

Under Marcello's guidance, MMAA's objectives are clear: advocating for the right of all capable individuals to serve their country, irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identity. This includes working tirelessly to overturn discriminatory policies affecting recruitment, career progression, and access to services like IVF for HIV-positive individuals. Marcello highlights, "We advocate for equality in service: that all who are capable of service and meet the standards should be able to serve."

Education and advocacy remain at the core of MMAA's efforts. By informing the public and policymakers about the challenges and contributions of LGBTQ+ individuals in the military, the organization seeks to broaden

perceptions and foster a more inclusive environment. Strategic litigation and the tracking of discrimination cases are also integral parts of MMAA's approach to securing and expanding civil rights.

Looking forward, MMAA's 2024 agenda is ambitious, focusing on eliminating all forms of discrimination against LGBTQ+ service members and veterans, including securing access to gender-affirming surgeries and comprehensive reproductive health services. Marcello and her team are also intent on improving the discharge review process, ensuring that those unjustly affected by previous discriminatory policies have their records corrected and their dignity restored.

Learn more [here](#).

General (Retired) Tammy Smith, reflecting on the importance of visibility and inclusion, eloquently states, "Military identity remains the foremost identity of a soldier, but it is also important to acknowledge the intersectionality of other personal identities. Visibility helps people rid their minds of stereotypes held about a person or group of people." This sentiment resonates deeply with MMAA's mission, highlighting the importance of acknowledging and embracing the full identity of all service members.

Through dedicated advocacy, educational outreach, and legal support, Cathy Marcello and the Modern Military Association of America continue to champion the rights and recognition of LGBTQ+ individuals within the American military, ensuring that service and sacrifice are honored regardless of one's identity.