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Navigating Change: Challenges and Triumphs in Sex Discrimination Law in 2025

OUR PANELISTS

MICHELLE BANKER
(she/her)

Senior Director of Litigation for Reproductive Rights and Health
National Women's Law Center

Michelle Banker (she/her) is Senior Director of Reproductive Rights and Health Litigation at the National Women's Law Center. She focuses on litigation to promote reproductive rights and access to health care, including reproductive health care. Before joining NWLC, Michelle was an attorney at Murphy Anderson PLLC, where she litigated on behalf of workers and unions in wage and hour matters and other workplace disputes. She also was an attorney at Covington & Burling LLP, where she worked on complex civil litigation and criminal matters and performed pro bono work in cases involving violations of constitutional rights. Michelle clerked for the Honorable Carol Bagley Amon, then-Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York. She also previously performed state policy research and advocacy on reproductive health issues for NWLC and volunteered for the National Health Law Program, focusing on reproductive health policy.

Michelle graduated magna cum laude from the University of Pennsylvania Law School, where she was a Comments Editor for the Penn Law Review and served as a judicial bypass counselor for the Penn Reproductive Rights Law Project (now If/When/How). She performed health policy research prior to law school at the Center for Studying Health System Change. She received her Bachelor's degree with Distinction in Economics and Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia.

Michelle is a member of the bars of the District of Columbia, New York, New Jersey, and Virginia (inactive) and is admitted to practice in numerous federal courts.

4 December 2025 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM ET

BRIAN DITTMEIER (he/him)

·Director of LGBTQI+ Equality,
National Women's Law Center

Brian Dittmeier (he/him) is the Director of LGBTQI+ Equality at the National Women's Law Center, where he works to advance legal protections and justice for LGBTQI+ people. With over a decade of legal and policy advocacy experience, Brian has fought for and secured new civil rights protections, inclusive curriculum in schools, increased investments to support low-income families, improvements to modernize federal programs, and accountability for the erosion of benefits and civil rights. Brian has previously served as the policy director at GLSEN, the inaugural advocacy chair of the National LGBTQ+ Anti-Poverty Action Network, and has worked in the anti-poverty, public health, and disability rights communities. Brian is a graduate of the George Washington University Law School.

LAUREN KHOURI (she/her)

Senior Director of Workplace Equality,
National Women's Law Center

Lauren Khouri (she/her) is the Senior Director of Workplace Equality and Senior Counsel at the National Women's Law Center. Lauren's work focuses on gender justice and employee rights, where she advocates for women, girls of color, and LGBTQI+ people through litigation and policy.

Prior to joining NWLC, Lauren was a partner at Correia & Puth, PLLC, a nationally recognized civil rights law firm. She is the Immediate Past President of the Metropolitan Washington Employment Lawyers' Association, a D.C.-area voluntary bar association comprised of over 350 lawyers who regularly advise and represent employees in employment and civil rights disputes. Lauren is ranked among the Lawdragon 500 for her work in employment and civil rights litigation, and has been recognized by Super Lawyers and Best Lawyers as a leader in civil rights law since 2019. In 2023, the National Employment Lawyers' Association awarded Lauren its annual Spotlight Award, an honor bestowed on an attorney who represents leaders who are the future of the field.

She earned her law degree from American University Washington College of Law, and serves on the Board of Teaching for Change, a nonprofit that supports educators who advance social change through classroom instruction. Lauren lives in Washington, D.C.

SHIWALI PATEL (she/her)

Senior Director for Education Justice,
National Women's Law Center

Shiwali Patel (she/her) is a nationally recognized Title IX expert and leads advocacy addressing gender-based harassment in schools, including sexual harassment and sexual assault. Her work also focuses on strengthening civil rights protections for LGBTQI+ students, advocating against censorship in schools through the proliferation of book and curriculum bans, and addressing other issues of gender equity in education. Previously, she was at the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), where she worked on civil rights policy and legal guidance interpreting Title IX's anti-discrimination protections, including schools' responsibilities in responding to sexual harassment, protections for transgender students, and the rights of girls of color. Before joining OCR, Shiwali was an Administrative Judge and investigator at the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Hearings and Appeals, a Special Assistant United States Attorney in the District of Columbia in the Sex Offense and Domestic Violence Unit, and a law clerk to the Honorable Laura A. Cordero at the Superior Court for the District of Columbia. Prior to law school, Shiwali was a community educator at the District of Columbia Rape Crisis Center, where she conducted workshops and educational presentations for adults and young people on sexual assault, domestic and dating abuse, and sexual harassment, and was a trained hotline counselor and hospital advocate.

Shiwali regularly speaks at conferences and events, and has been quoted in outlets, including the New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today, CNN, LA Times, Mother Jones, NPR, as well as in the legal press.

Shiwali serves as the Co-Chair of the Leadership Conference's Education Task Force, and on the Board of Callisto. She previously served as the Board President of the Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project (DVRP), as Vice President for Community Affairs of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of the Greater Washington, D.C. Area, Inc. (APABA-DC), and on the Board of Directors of APABA-DC Educational Fund. Shiwali graduated from Boston University and American University Washington College of Law, where she is an adjunct law professor.