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Spencer Fane Holds 2024 Pride Celebration and Discussion

Spencer Fane was honored to host special guest Tina Weaver, executive director of the OUT Foundation, for the firm's third annual Pride celebration on June 11. The virtual event, LGBTQIA+ Awareness and Allyship for Legal Professionals, was also a part of the second annual Spencer Fane Advantage CLE series.

The session was sponsored by Spencer Fane+, the firm's connect group for LGBTQIA+ professionals and allies. Supporting the group's mission to foster a broader legal culture of acceptance and justice, Spencer Fane+ Committee member Stacy Harper co-led the hourlong discussion with Tina. First, they outlined common challenges LGBTQIA+ individuals face, such as bias and discrimination. Noting that these harmful attitudes are often reflected in the over 750 pieces of legislation currently being introduced across the U.S., Tina explained how discriminatory bills and laws engender increased stigma and discrimination, mental health strain, erosion of trust in institutions, negative impact on youth, and economic and social isolation.

To combat these hurdles, Tina and Stacy explored strategies to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for LGBTQIA+ individuals. These actionable steps included honoring preferred pronoun usage and other expressions of identity, do's and don'ts for when colleagues or clients "come out," and using gender-neutral language whenever possible.

Tina emphasized allyship is an ongoing practice that should extend beyond a single month of the year. "Being an ally is not something we can self-identify … what I can hope to earn from [other marginalized] communities, is that *they* proclaim me an ally. And that's done by my daily actions and how they see me operating on this earth to support them … we want to have those daily actions of support," they

shared.

Learn more about the OUT Foundation here and about diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts at Spencer Fane here.