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Keene Pride's Statement on the horrific shooting at Club Q in Colorado Springs, CO

Keene Pride is shattered by the deranged actions of a 22-year-old man, who opened fire on patrons at Club Q in Colorado Springs killing five and injuring 25 others. Our hearts deeply mourn for the victims, their families and club patrons who lived through yet another terrifying experience visited upon the LGBTQ+ community.

The relentless trajectory of hate against the LGBTQ+ community continues to unfold regardless of strides made, and it can happen anywhere. It didn't matter that the Governor of Colorado, Jared Polis, is an out gay man who was just elected to his second term. Or that in 2019 under his leadership a bill was passed to ban conversion therapy, as well as another law making it easier for transgender people to update gender on their birth certificate and legal documents. At the time, Polis said, "These bills truly underscore the idea that Colorado is a state where everyone can be their true selves and live the life they want."

But on Saturday night, a gunman decided to murder patrons in a gay nightclub. Pointing his long rifle into the crowd, he intended to do harm. Why choose this location? Club Q opened in 2002, twenty years ago. The LGBTQ+ community has always considered the club a safe haven. A drag brunch and drag show was planned for Sunday, 11/20, to recognize Transgender Day of Remembrance. Until Saturday at midnight, safety and security was taken for granted in Colorado Springs and especially at Club Q, but this is now gone.

Colorado Springs is home to 500,000 and has a strong military presence. It also happens to be the headquarters for the conservative Christian group, Focus on the Family, which preaches that same-sex marriage and homosexuality are sins. The Family Research Council, a division of Focus on the Family, is listed along with 17 other Colorado organizations as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Could the insidious messaging of so many like-minded groups contribute to an undertone of intolerance, unreasoned fear and the need to purge?

Despite all the efforts of Colorado's legislature to ensure equality for the state's LGBTQ+ residents, the young gunman chose a very specific target. Although his intentions have not yet been discerned, the devastating end result will linger upon the loved ones of all those who died, and those who lived through the trauma. The insensible actions of one young man will remain a stain on Colorado just as the 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida remains a devastating, watershed moment.

Yes, Keene Pride is heartbroken. But we are also vigilant. And we are angry. Keene Pride was formed to ensure a place of safety and support for the region's LGBTQ+ community. Although not even a year old, our efforts have been met with welcoming arms for which we are grateful. It would be easy to feel the glow of success, and forget that New Hampshire boasts six hate groups including the American Nazi Party, the Proud Boys, the Nationalist Social Club and the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (only 14 miles from Keene.)

So we mourn the lives of our universal LGBTQ+ family who have been lost. We know our work is far from over and that our resolve must remain strong. As Oscar Wilde said, "Where there is sorrow, there is holy ground." Keene Pride commits to standing upon this ground as a beacon to those seeking refuge and acceptance in the Monadnock Region. Our mission is clear.