



February 26, 2018

The Honorable Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Chair
House State Affairs Committee
Alaska State House of Representatives
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

by email: Representative.Jonathan.Kreiss-Tomkins@akleg.gov

Re: Advancing LBGT Rights: ACLU of Alaska Support for HB 184

Dear Chair Kreiss-Tomkins, Vice-Chair LeDoux, and Members of House State Affairs Committee:

The ACLU of Alaska supports House Bill 184, which is critical legislation to protect our gay and transgender friends, family, and neighbors from discrimination. Anchorage has had these protections in place for more than two years without issue, but even these protections are under attack. HB 184 would be a substantial step forward to living up to the Alaskan values of fairness and freedom from discrimination.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in Alaska face discrimination in their daily lives. In fact, a study interviewing 84 transgender Alaskans in 2015 was released last year and shows how necessary the protections provided by HB 184 are to transgender Alaskans. A copy of this study is included with our testimony.

In 2015 alone, 85% of Alaskan transgender children were verbally harassed, prohibited from dressing according to their gender identity, disciplined more harshly, or physically or sexually assaulted because they were transgender.¹ This is unacceptable. The adult population also faces significant discrimination:

- 32% of transgender Alaskans experienced some form of housing discrimination and 23% experienced homelessness.²

¹ 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey—Alaska State Report, *National Center for Transgender Equality* (August 2017), <http://www.fairanchorage.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/USTS-AK-State-Report.pdf>.

² *Id.*

- 25% reported being forced to use the wrong restroom, were told to present in the wrong gender in order to keep their job, or had a boss or coworker share private information about their transgender status without permission.³
- 17% were denied employment opportunities or were fired because of their gender identity or expression.⁴
- Nationally, one in ten transgender individuals was physically assaulted in 2015.⁵ But in Alaska, 47% of transgender individuals do not feel comfortable asking police for help when they need it.⁶

The discrimination that transgender Alaskans experience is prevalent and abhorrent to the fair, free, and welcoming state we all want Alaska to be. These protections are critical to so many Alaskans, but particularly for our children. We laud Representative Josephson and the co-sponsors of HB 184 for recognizing the rights of Alaskans to be free from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. By passing HB 184, Alaska will join twenty states and the District of Columbia in banning discrimination based on who someone is or whom they love.

Sincerely,



Melissa H. Goldstein
Legal Fellow

Att: 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey—Alaska State Report
cc: Vice Chair Gabrielle LeDoux, Representative.Gabrielle.LeDoux@akleg.gov
Representative Chris Tuck, Representative.Chris.Tuck@akleg.gov
Representative Adam Wool, Representative.Adam.Wool@akleg.gov
Representative Chris Birch, Representative.Chris.Birch@akleg.gov
Representative DeLena Johnson, Representative.DeLena.Johnson@akleg.gov
Representative Gary Knopp, Representative.Gary.Knopp@akleg.gov
Representative Andy Josephson, Representative.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov
Representative Chuck Kopp, Representative.Chuck.Kopp@akleg.gov

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey Report—Executive Summary, *National Center for Transgender Equality* (December 2016), <https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS-Executive-Summary-Dec17.pdf>.

⁶ 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey—Alaska State Report.