



Alaska

April 23, 2019

The Honorable Zack Fields, Co-Chair
The Honorable Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Co-Chair
House State Affairs Committee
Alaska State House of Representatives
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801
by email: Hsta@akleg.gov

Re: Advancing LBGT Rights: ACLU of Alaska Support for HB 82

Dear Co-Chairs Fields and Kreiss-Tomkins, and Members of the House State Affairs Committee:

The ACLU of Alaska supports House Bill (HB) 82, which is critical legislation to protect our gay and transgender neighbors from discrimination. While communities like Anchorage, Juneau and Sitka have enacted local non-discrimination ordinances (NDOs), lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals elsewhere in Alaska, equally deserving of lives free of discrimination, lack similar protections. HB 82 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 continue to face discrimination in their daily lives. Within the past five months, we heard poignant testimony from transgender individuals in Fairbanks who have been denied needed medication from a pharmacist, the ability to visit loved ones in the hospital, and even home repairs from local contractors—all because of who they are. Many individuals who came forward to share their experiences of discrimination, in support of a local NDO for Fairbanks, came forward knowing they could be risking their jobs or their homes. That Mayor James Matherly chose to veto the NDO after the Fairbanks City Council passed it leaves these individuals at continued risk—making the passage of HB 82 all the more important.

A statewide survey of 84 transgender Alaskans, conducted in 2015 and released in 2017, shows that these experiences are not confined to Fairbanks.

In 2015 alone, 85% of the Alaskan transgender children who responded to the survey were verbally harassed, prohibited from dressing according to their gender identity, disciplined more harshly, or physically or sexually assaulted because they were transgender. In the adult population, 32% experienced some form of housing discrimination and 23% experienced homelessness.¹ One in four (25%) adult respondents 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. Seventeen percent were denied employment opportunities or fired because of their gender identity or expression.² Nationally, one in ten transgender individuals has been physically assaulted in 2015,³ yet in Alaska, nearly half (47%) of transgender individuals do not feel comfortable asking police for help when they need it.⁴

The discrimination that transgender Alaskans experience is prevalent and abhorrent to the fair, free, and welcoming state we all want Alaska to become. We laud Representative Josephson and the co-sponsors of House Bill 82 for recognizing the rights of Alaskans to be free from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. By passing HB 82, Alaska will join twenty states and more than 200 localities across the country in banning discrimination based on who someone is or whom they love.

Sincerely,



Triada Stampas
Policy Director

cc: Representative Andy Josephson, Representative.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov

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.*

³ 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>.

⁴ 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey—Alaska State Report.