

House State Affairs Committee Members,

I am writing to you to encourage the passage of HB 184. As you may know the City and Borough of Sitka Assembly unanimously passed similar protections this past December 2017. While a few municipalities have taken steps to provide these important and constitutional protections to all members of our communities, there are thousands of Alaskans who are left unprotected. Public anti discrimination laws and civil rights protections are important protections to provide everyone in our communities regardless of race, gender, age, sexual orientation or identity. Discrimination is a real threat that even protected individuals continue to experience, reducing their wellbeing, economic and social opportunity, and bottom line their right to happiness and prosperity. In Sitka alone 58 claims of discrimination were filed from 2012-2016 with 22 resulting in full investigations and mitigation. None of these included claims of discrimination towards individuals on a basis of sexual orientation or gender identity not because it doesn't happen, but because it isn't protected or tracked by courts, human rights commission or other entity. We do know however from 2015 survey of 84 individuals that 14% of them reported loosing a job, 85% reported mistreatment in education settings, 32% reported discrimination in housing, all because of their perceived or real sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

It is time for Alaska to provide, statewide, protections for all of our citizens, the real pursuit of happiness, opportunity and success regardless of who they love and how they express themselves.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kevin Knox

Kevin Knox
City and Borough of Sitka Assembly
PO Box 6415
Sitka, AK 99835

907.738.4664