

Hello, my name is Kasey Casort, and I'm from Fairbanks. I am testifying in support of HB 184.

In high school, I was the Vice President of my school's Gender Sexuality Alliance, and I wrote a letter of support for a different version of this bill when I was fourteen. It was the first bill I ever printed out and went through with a highlighter, because it mattered so much to me. Now I'm nineteen, and I know that it just makes sense to have fundamental protections under the law.

Young people like me have grown up watching America learn to accept us for who we love and the way we live, but in Alaska we can still be fired, kicked out of our homes, denied loans, and prevented from achieving our full potential based on our identities. I am an ally, and I know that it's time to move this bill out of committee and onto the floor, where our representatives can show us that they're ready to stand up for all of their constituents.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today, and I urge you to support HB 184. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr./Madam Chair. For the record my name is Channon Price, and I live in House District 04/Senate District B. I have been a voting citizen in that district for over thirty years, during which time I have also raised a family. I have come today to offer my views on House Bill 184 (SB 72), which would update Alaska's non-discrimination statutes. The right to self-expression should only be limited when it poses a clear danger to the safety of others. Within that limitation, any person should enjoy the same rights as others. Historically, Alaska lead the nation in establishing protections against discrimination in housing and employment based on race, creed, color and national origin. Our great state has added protections covering individuals against discrimination based on disability, age, sex, marital status, pregnancy and parenthood. This is because there was and continues to be a sense that our state is great because it is plural: that this is not just a great state for, as an example, white males. Regrettably, in 2015 the Alaska Supreme Court found a very narrow definition of the protections based on sex, choosing to exclude sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression from those protections. I personally know of Alaskans who have been impacted, both in their attempts to find employment and in their attempts to obtain housing, by discrimination against orientation or against identity/expression. This is wrong: orientation and identity have no relation to how well one does their job, and what goes on behind closed doors -- our private lives -- is no one's business as long as it stays with the limitation noted above. Discrimination is based on beliefs. You are entitled to your belief, as long as it does not cause harm to others. It was a founding principle of this nation that one group of citizens never have the right to impose their religious beliefs on another group, as this infringes on the right of the second group to practice their beliefs as they saw fit, to choose their beliefs. Orientation and identity are even more fundamental than beliefs, as one does not have the choice of one's orientation and identity: in that, they are like one's color or national origin. Thus, it is just as wrong to discriminate against an individual based on their orientation and identity. For these reasons, I wholeheartedly support this bill, and I encourage the committee to move the bill to the full House for its consideration and approval. I would like to thank the committee for their time in considering my point of view.

Hello Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins,

My name is Emily Berman, I live in House District 17, and I'm representing myself. I am testifying in support of House Bill 184 because I believe that the State of Alaska should have non-discrimination laws for everyone, including our LGBTQ+ community members.

An overwhelming 97% of transgender people report having been harassed on the job, and 26% have been fired because of their gender identity. I have a close transgender friend who quit his job this past December because of harassment regarding his gender identity. He is talented, skilled, and hardworking, and was an asset to his employer. He is just one example of many everyday Alaskans across the state who live in fear of being fired, denied housing, public service or educational opportunities because they are gay or transgender.

I encourage all of you to pass House Bill 184.

Emily Berman

Thank you Chairman. For the record, my name is Jeff Chen. I live in House District 18, and I am speaking on behalf of myself.

I'm testifying in support of House Bill 184 because I believe the State of Alaska should have non-discrimination laws for everyone, including our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer community members.

I am a Taiwanese American. I work in the youth conservation community. And I am on the Board of Directors of the Alaska Chinese Association, though I am only representing myself in my testimony.

Our history is full of acts of legal discrimination based on local, state, and federal policies. Immigrant families know discrimination -- legal discrimination. For example, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 barred Chinese immigrants from entering the country and gaining access to housing, work, and places of public accommodation. The ramifications were felt throughout society, and led to physical violence and literally the massacre of Chinese communities.

There is no justice in excluding based on race, religion, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, and marital status -- just as there is no justice in discriminating based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

44% of LGBTQ respondents reported facing discrimination at work. In Alaska, that discrimination is legal, and that discrimination is leading to an increase in anti-LGBTQ violence across the country.

I support HB 184 because our LGBTQ family and friends should not have to face discrimination in the workplace, in public, or at home. Remember, through the perseverance of Elizabeth Peratrovich and other Alaska Native and Alaskan advocates, our state passed some of the nation's first anti-discrimination laws. I urge you to support HB 184. Thank you.

Good Morning!

I am contacting the House State Affairs Committee in support of House Bill 184: Non-Discrimination Statue to Promote Fairness. Extending the protections already recognized by the State and Federal government to include sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression is a change that needs to occur and has long been lacking. Members of the LGBT community are citizens of the US, and should not be treated any differently than any other citizen in their employment, housing, public accommodation and financing opportunities. And yet, there is still the pervasive attitude that members of the LGBT community can be treated as second class citizens, primarily on aspects of religion or discomfort with their lifestyle. This isn't allowable legally, against any other group. For example, it is blatantly illegal if housing is denied to a couple based on the situation that they aren't married, even (and especially) if the opposition to their lifestyle is based on religious conviction. How is that different than the same situation, where instead of a an unmarried couple, it is a married LGBT couple? I implore that the representatives here move HB 184 forward, to apply anti discrimination rights consistently to all US citizens. Thank you very much for your time and efforts. If you have any comments, concerns, or questions for me, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Michael J Szidloski, II

Constituent in Fairbanks, Alaska

Dear Representative,

I would like to address my support for HB 184. As I age, I am now in my mid-60s, I find that my definition of tolerance has become more open. I still have strong opinions about ideas, but I find my strongest opinion is to allow others to have a basic dignity of life, the ability to make their own life choices without fear. I may not agree with someone's lifestyle, but they have the right to pursue their choices with the protection of our laws, just as I have protection for my choices. I see no harm to others with the passage of this law and fail to see why we would not, as a state and a country, allow equal protection to all our citizens.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my opinion on this issue. I hope I can count on your support for HB 184.

Sincerely,

Jane Reilly

Dear Representatives,

I am emailing in support of HB 184. Sexual orientation and gender identity are unrelated to performance in the work place, and should not be cause for workplace discrimination or firing. Nor should sexual orientation be cause for discrimination from housing or public accommodation. Though certain sexual orientations or practices may be distasteful to some, it is important to remember that these practices are private and have no business being origins of cultural discrimination in areas employment, housing, and financing practices.

We already prohibit discrimination based on race, religion, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, and marital status. It is time to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people as well.

Please use this email as my public testimony.

Thank you,  
Catherine Coward  
Anchorage, AK 99507