

testimony for public comment on HB 184/SB 72

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.