Representative Beth Kerttula

House Minority Leader

Sexual Orientation Discrimination

House Bill 139

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 139 expands current anti-discrimination statutes to include protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Similar provisions already prohibit discrimination based upon race, religion, color, national origin, physical or mental disability, age, sex, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy or parenthood.

House Bill 139 would protect citizens from discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, financing or credit based upon sexual orientation.

The State of Alaska has already taken steps to prevent discrimination with a 2002 administrative order that provides protection against sexual orientation discrimination for employees of the state and those they serve. In 2010, the University of Alaska amended its anti-discrimination policy to include protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

The overwhelming majority of America's most successful businesses have already adopted anti-discrimination policies that include protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia have enacted legislation similar to House Bill 139. Despite the progress that has been made, 73% of LGBT respondents to a survey in Anchorage reported hiding their sexual orientation in order to avoid job discrimination after experiencing abuse or harassment in the workplace.

Historically, Alaska has been at the forefront of civil rights legislation. The Territorial Legislature awarded women the right to vote in 1913, well before it was passed at the national level. In 1945, the Alaska Legislature passed landmark anti-discriminatory legislation protecting Alaska Natives. House Bill 139 is another opportunity for the Legislature to keep Alaska at the forefront of combating discrimination and promoting civil rights.

Thank you for your support of House Bill 139.