



May 1, 2017

Honorable Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Chairperson
House State Affairs Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capital
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Support for House Bill 184 – Prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

Dear Chairperson Kreiss-Tomkins and Committee Members,

Alaskans Together for Equality (ATE) fully supports making all Alaskans equal and protected from discrimination through passing House Bill (HB) 184: “An act adding to the powers and duties of the State Commission for Human Rights; and relating to and prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.”

ATE represents hundreds of members across the state of Alaska. We are a statewide, nonpartisan, civil rights organization whose mission is to advance civil equality for all Alaskans through grassroots organizing and advocacy, with a primary focus on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Alaskans. We advocate for all Alaskans because the stronger the foundation of equal civil rights across institutions and practices makes for a better Alaska. All Alaskans will be enabled to take advantage of opportunities to create healthy lives and produce income that allows for a stronger state.

ATE believes that HB184 is imperative to securing the rights and opportunities of all Alaskans and provides the tools to pursue these opportunities. HB184 positively impacts all Alaskans by strengthening the foundation of equality and protecting civil rights.

As Alaska continues to weather economic challenges, it is imperative that the State do all that it can do to attract and retain a skilled and diverse labor force. When the United States Congress Joint Economic Committee examined the economic consequences of discrimination

based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in November of 2013¹, it found that discrimination results in detrimental economic impacts including: lower profits; higher turnover costing business more to train and retain employees; reduced wages and underemployment; reduced economic growth through lost productivity, inefficiencies in the economy and an overall misallocation of crucial human capital.

We urge you to support the justice, fairness and equality for all Alaskans by supporting HB184. With this bill's passage, the Alaska legislature ensures the right for individual Alaskans to work, innovate, and contribute to our state. HB184 is integral to meeting Alaska's economic challenges and will send a strong message to Alaska's LGBT community and those talented LGBT individuals and their families who are considering making Alaska their home, that our state is a welcoming state to all.

Thank you for hearing this bill and after years of waiting for a vote, we hope you pass this bill through this committee but also encourage your fellow legislators to move this bill to the House floor and pass it. Not only is it the right thing to do but it also aligns with our Alaskan values of fairness and equality for all.

On behalf of the ATE Board and our members,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Rojas', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Elias Rojas
Board President
Alaskan Together for Equality

¹ http://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/42dc59a0-6071-46d0-8ff2-9bd7a6b0077f/enda---final-11.5.13.pdf