

February 6, 2020

To Whom it May Concern;

I am urging you to support HB 198 in which the State of Alaska adds sexual orientation and gender identity as aggravators to Alaska's current sentencing laws. While it is in no means an anti-discrimination act, it is a step in the right direction and the closest thing that Alaska has to hate crime laws.

I have heard many people arguing that this legislation is unnecessary and "gives one group special treatment over the others". But it doesn't. Though the added words "gender identity" and "sexual orientation" are typically associated with the LGBTQ community, every person on earth has these characteristics, just as they have sex, age, ability, race, and other protected classes. There is literally nothing for anyone to lose with HB-198, other than the time spent arguing it and the perpetrators of violent acts.

Folks may say we don't need these laws, that they "don't see" race or gender, and "what does it matter we are all human". Ultimately, that is correct. We are all human, but until we start acting like it, we need these types of laws. Just because a cis-het person doesn't see the harm and violence committed toward LGBTQ folks, doesn't mean it isn't happening. Passage of this bill would acknowledge and validate the experiences of these marginalized people.

Society tends to act in reflection of their shared values. Especially when displayed by their leaders, please lead us in a positive and inclusive direction.

Thank you,

Leslie Byrd

Voting constituent, 99669

~~Message~~ - targeting one person because of their protected class is to instill terror/fear. That is why we need these protected classes.