

**From:** [Julie Schmidt](#)  
**To:** [House State Affairs](#)  
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As an elder member of the LGBT community, I am very pleased to see HB 198 being addressed and would like to testify for the need of this bill. The FBI finds nearly 1 in 5 hate crimes are motivated by anti-LGBTQ bias, but this group is not included in the aggravating factors of our Alaska hate crime law at present. Transgender and gender-non conforming people make up about 2.4% of all reported hate crimes and the overall number of hate crimes affecting the LGBTQ community is up about 18% from the previous year. While Gallup estimates the LGBTQ community is about 5% of the total population, they make up about 18% of hate crime victims.

Hate crimes are different from the usual crimes because they are not directed simply at an individual, but are meant to cause fear and intimidation in an entire group of people. This was vividly illustrated by the outpouring of support last summer for a lesbian who was harassed and attacked in Soldotna. That news quickly spread through the LGBTQ community and heightened awareness that those types of attacks are still happening in our state.

Expanding hate crimes to include sexual orientation and gender identity is about sending a message that violence against lesbians, gays, bisexual, and transgenders people isn't okay, but opposing this bill would send the message that LGBTQ people are still legitimate targets for violence.

The LGBTQ population in Alaska is a productive, respected contributor to society. By adding sexual orientation and gender identity to this law, you will be adding a layer of protection to a very vulnerable community. I cannot think of any reason for opposition to this bill that will add protection for ALL Alaskans.

Respectfully, Julie Schmidt  
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