

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 14, 2022

1:34 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Matt Claman, Chair  
Representative Liz Snyder, Vice Chair  
Representative Harriet Drummond  
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins  
Representative David Eastman  
Representative Christopher Kurka

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Sarah Vance

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE BILL NO. 17

"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."

- HEARD & HELD

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

State Commission for Human Rights

Lonzo Henderson - Anchorage  
Mae Marsh-Prax - Fairbanks

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 17

SHORT TITLE: DISCRIMINATION: GENDER ID.;SEXUAL ORIENT.

SPONSOR(S) : REPRESENTATIVE(S) JOSEPHSON

02/18/21	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21
02/18/21	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/18/21	(H)	STA, JUD
05/05/21	(H)	STA REFERRAL MOVED TO AFTER JUD
05/05/21	(H)	BILL REPRINTED

02/09/22 (H) JUD AT 1:30 PM GRUENBERG 120  
02/09/22 (H) Heard & Held  
02/09/22 (H) MINUTE (JUD)  
03/14/22 (H) JUD AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120

**WITNESS REGISTER**

NOAH WILLIAMS, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

QUEEN PARKER, representing self  
Sterling, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 17.

JESSICA ROZATO, representing self  
Denali, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

KASEY CASSORT, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

KAREN BAKER, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

ELLEN WEISER, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

AMY BENDER, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

CRYSTAL BARWICK, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

BRENDA HASTIE, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 17.

DAVID CLARK  
Gender Justice and Policy Communications Manager  
Native Movement  
Anchorage, Alaska

**STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

ARLEIGH HITCHCOCK, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

MICHAEL GARVEY, Advocacy Director  
American Civil Liberties Union of Alaska  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

JULIE SMYTH, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

MICHELLE GAVEL, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

PHIL MOSER, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

MARY ELIZABETH KEHRHAHN-STARK, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

LIN DAVIS, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

ALYSSA QUINTYNE, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

MIKE COONS, representing self  
Palmer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 17.

JAMIE YOU, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

MAUREEN LONGWORTH, MD, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

KATIE BOTZ, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to HB 17.

DICK FARRIS, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

AMY RUSSELL, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

SUSAN MCGLOIN, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 17.

LONZO HENDERSON, Appointee  
State Commission for Human Rights  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as an appointee to the State Commission for Human Rights.

MAE MARSH-PRAX, Appointee  
State Commission for Human Rights  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as an appointee to the State Commission for Human Rights.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:34:54 PM](#)

**CHAIR MATT CLAMAN** called the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:34 p.m. Representatives Claman and Snyder were present at the call to order. Representatives Kreiss-Tomkins (via teleconference), Eastman, Kurka, and Drummond arrived as the meeting was in progress.

#### **HB 17-DISCRIMINATION: GENDER ID.;SEXUAL ORIENT.**

[Contains discussion of SB 140.]

[1:35:38 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 17, "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."

[1:36:06 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN opened public testimony on HB 17.

[1:36:35 PM](#)

NOAH WILLIAMS, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. He stated that, as an emergency contact for queer, trans, and gender nonconforming friends, he has witnessed the harm of gender- and sex-based hatred. He stated that these matters could not be legislated out of existence; moreover, making this discrimination illegal would have positive financial influences. He expressed the opinion that the passage of HB 17 would indicate the support and declaration that this hatred is unacceptable, and these views are not the majority opinion. Furthermore, he indicated that the passage of SB 140 would "crush" the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and queer (LGBTQ) community. He expressed support for adding the recognition of gender identity as its own provision. He stated that much case law relies on a reversal precedent which would couple sex and gender, and he argued that gender is a social construct.

[1:38:35 PM](#)

QUEEN PARKER, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 17. She expressed the opinion that the passage of HB 17 would punish businesses and individuals. She expressed her opinion concerning what God has intended.

[1:39:48 PM](#)

JESSICA ROZATO, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. She spoke of her experience as part of the LGBTQ community, stating that she receives support from her friends and family. She thanked the sponsor for creating an opportunity for protections for the LGBTQ community, as the human rights protections for the community are under constant challenges. She expressed the opinion that Alaska, as a state, values privacy more than any other state, and she urged the passage of HB 17.

[1:41:16 PM](#)

KASEY CASSORT, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. She stated that she had become aware of similar proposed legislation while in high school, and she had studied that bill's language to learn about protections. She described how she became aware of the need for protection against discrimination, related to housing, employment, banking, and public services. It has been nearly a decade since the previous bill, and she suggested that it is time for HB 17 to pass. She expressed frustration that members of the LGBTQ community have testified to the legislature regarding terrifying experiences of discrimination, with no legislation being passed to prevent this. She conveyed her experiences of being a joyful member of the LGBTQ community and of participating in many events.

[1:43:23 PM](#)

KAREN BAKER, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. She stated that Alaska is in dire need of statewide protections for the LGBTQ community. She stated that only a few communities have anti-discrimination laws related to gender identity or sexual orientation, and currently it could be permissible for an individual to be evicted from housing or fired from a job based on the person's sexual orientation. She shared her experience of working to pass the anti-discrimination ordinance in Fairbanks, where a vocal minority had given abusive testimony, accusing the LGBTQ community of horrendous acts. By speaking in favor of this ordinance prior to its passage, she stated that members of the LGBTQ community put themselves at risk of loss of employment or housing. She noted that the former mayor of Fairbanks had vetoed the ordinance a few days following its passage. She maintained that these protections should exist for all Alaskans and not be subject to the changes in administrations. She stated that [SB 140] has been introduced in the other body as an anti-transgender bill, and over 100 people have contacted the legislature in opposition. She expressed her frustration that previously proposed, similar legislation had not passed.

[1:45:40 PM](#)

ELLEN WEISER, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. She shared that she had been a teacher for many years, and she is not a member of the LGBTQ community; however, she stated that she has observed the negative impacts of discrimination of members of the community, as well as those who discriminate. She expressed the fear that young people are growing up in communities where these debates must occur. She suggested that

the children affected may become public officials in the future and expressed the opinion that discrimination in any form is dangerous for all involved. She urged the passage of HB 17.

[1:47:28 PM](#)

AMY BENDER, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. She stated that HB 17 would address equality and personal liberty. She suggested that all people should be able to live without fear, regardless of sexual orientation or identity. She cited that nearly two thirds of LGBTQ Americans have been the victim of discrimination. She noted that during her experience as a nurse practitioner, she worked daily with clients who identify as LGBTQ, and she expressed anger at the reports of discrimination. She argued that all citizens should be permitted to have a home and employment without the fear of discrimination. She urged the passage of HB 17.

[1:48:40 PM](#)

CRYSTAL BARWICK, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. She echoed previous testimony and expressed her belief that identity politics could be used to discriminate against others. She expressed her gratitude to the sponsors and other supporters of the bill.

[1:49:50 PM](#)

BRENDA HASTIE, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 17. She asked the committee to consider the Bible and expressed the belief that passing the bill would result in destruction. She expressed her belief that biological women would be protected, should the bill not pass.

[1:51:34 PM](#)

DAVID CLARK, Gender Justice and Policy Communications Manager, Native Movement, testified in support of HB 17. He urged strong action on the bill to provide justice to LGBTQ Alaskans in employment and housing. He noted that only four communities in Alaska had codified nondiscrimination policies to protect LGBTQ and two-spirit individuals. He stated that individuals deserve protections in law, and that the law should not protect perpetrators of discrimination based on personal and religious claims. He urged the passage of HB 17.

[1:52:50 PM](#)

ARLEIGH HITCHCOCK, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. She noted that attacks have occurred against LGBTQ individuals across the country and within Alaska. She stated that the passage of HB 17 was necessary considering the proposed [SB] 140. She shared experiences of discrimination as an openly trans person and of joy as a member of the LGBTQ community. She urged support for the passage of HB 17.

[1:54:15 PM](#)

MICHAEL GARVEY, Advocacy Director, American Civil Liberties Union of Alaska, testified in support of HB 17. He characterized the bill as critical legislation to protect members of the LGBTQ community from discrimination. He noted that some communities in Alaska had enacted local nondiscrimination ordinances and those outside of those communities deserve the same protections. He stated that explicit statutory protections from tangible harms are necessary pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. He noted that HB 17 would establish these protections in the areas of housing, employment, banking, and public accommodations. He offered that a 2015 survey of trans people in Alaska revealed high percentages of respondents reporting instances of denials of employment or job loss, housing denials or evictions, denials of services from businesses open to the public, harassment, and assault. He offered that this type of discrimination would be antithetical to the fair and free place Alaska strives to be. He stated that the LGBTQ community wants access to housing, economic stability, and the ability to care for their families.

[1:56:44 PM](#)

JULIE SMYTH, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. She stated that her Inupiaq language and culture has no pronouns and three genders. She noted that many types of relationships have existed throughout Inupiaq history, and this is not unique to the Inupiaq culture. She expressed the support of the separation of church and state and offered that there exists no reason to not pass the bill, other than religious [arguments]. She shared her experience in the workplace of observing managers who concealed the identity of trans workers in order to protect them from termination, and she has observed individuals who lost jobs because of involvement in the LGBTQ community. She stated that HB 17 would support Indigenous communities throughout Alaska.

[1:58:22 PM](#)

MICHELLE GAVEL, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. She expressed support for friends and family members who are members of the LGBTQ community. She shared her observation of harm which resulted from legislation pertaining to discrimination. She asked fellow testifiers who offer comments regarding religion to be mindful of the edict to "love thy neighbor." She urged the passage of HB 17.

[2:00:04 PM](#)

PHIL MOSER, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. He stated that the need for the passage of HB 17 exists to protect neighbors and community members. He described the "lavender scare" and that singling out individuals for their existence in the LGBTQ community is akin to the "red scare." He requested that the committee consider that, when the Nazi Party came into power, its first action was to ban books on gender-affirming health care to trans people.

[2:02:28 PM](#)

MARY ELIZABETH KEHRHAHN-STARK, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. She urged the committee's support of the bill, as it would provide statewide protection for nondiscrimination against members of the LGBTQ community. She suggested that views of those who are anti-LGBTQ are antiquated and unaccepting simply because of differences in lifestyle. She stated that the U. S. Supreme Court decision in the case of Bostock v. Clayton County, 590 U.S. 644 (2020), had prompted the Alaska Human Rights Commission to include sexual orientation and gender identity in the definition of sex. She pointed out that broad demographics exist, which include race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion, and other groups throughout the world.

[2:04:31 PM](#)

LIN DAVIS, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. She shared her experience in advocating for LGBTQ human rights for over 30 years and noted she has testified to the legislature in support of previous, similar legislation for more than 10 years. She expressed the opinion that those in opposition to this and similar bills have done so with hostility, adding that the passage of SB 140 would cause harm to Alaskans. She shared

an anecdote in which same-sex military families in Alaska have been denied permanent fund dividends. She urged the passage of HB 17.

[2:06:58 PM](#)

ALYSSA QUINTYNE, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. She suggested that the legislature has failed over the course of more than 63 years to protect its LGBTQ constituents. She stated that the core purpose of the proposed bill would be to ensure that constituents have access to resources, services, and opportunities which are necessary to survive. She conveyed that members of the LGBTQ community have been fired, attacked, evicted, denied medical services, and denied education. She expressed the opinion that this is all because of the discomfort of others, and the failure to pass HB 17 would be tantamount to protecting these individuals' perspectives. She expressed anger at the legislature's failure to act to protect members of the LGBTQ community.

[2:09:31 PM](#)

MIKE COONS, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 17 and expressed support for SB 140. He referred to the state constitution, which provides that all persons have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and people should not be denied the enjoyment of any civil or political right because of race, color, creed, or status of national origin. He pointed out that sexual orientation and gender identity or expression has been added to the constitution and expressed the opinion that this be amended.

[2:12:03 PM](#)

JAMIE YOU, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. He shared his status as a transgender man and expressed joy for his experience of social acceptance and support. He noted that there exists federal legislation pending which would expand constitutional protections to include gender identity and sexual orientation. He urged the passage of HB 17.

[2:14:08 PM](#)

MAUREEN LONGWORTH, MD, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. She stated that she has been a physician in Alaska for more than 30 years, with her opinions informed by medical training and education. She pointed out that she studied the

ambiguity of gender while in medical school. She described advising parents of children with ambiguous gender and how to proceed. She continued that advancement in the arena of studies pertaining to gender have been made, and the American Medical Association (AMA) has extensive information available on its website pertaining to discrimination and feelings of inequality, which contribute to the increased abuse, [poor] mental health, drug abuse, and suicide among LGBTQ community members. She stated that AMA has expressed support for the equal rights, privileges, and freedoms of all individuals, and it has expressed opposition to discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, ethnic origin, national origin, or age.

[2:16:49 PM](#)

KATIE BOTZ, representing self, testified in opposition to HB 17. She expressed strong opposition to the bill. She stated that previous testifiers had raised religion in their testimony and offered that one is either a man or a woman. She expressed the opinion that passage of HB 17 would allow individuals to enter bathrooms, or other areas, and sexually assault other people.

[2:18:33 PM](#)

DICK FARRIS, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. He characterized the bill as positive, while those who discriminate or have discriminatory thoughts are negative.

[2:19:09 PM](#)

AMY RUSSELL, representing self, testified in support of HB 17 and against discrimination, which affects the civil rights and protections for those with different sexual orientations. She urged the committee to support the bill.

[2:20:31 PM](#)

SUSAN MCGLOIN, representing self, testified in support of HB 17. She stated that she is a registered nurse and has worked in many locations in Alaska for over 40 years. She stated that she has cared for individuals who have been brutally attacked because of their sexual choices. She emphasized that real harm exists. She urged the passage of HB 17.

[2:22:49 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN, after ascertaining there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 17.

CHAIR CLAMAN announced that HB 17 was held over.

**CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):**  
**State Commission for Human Rights**

[2:23:09 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN announced that the final order of business would be the confirmation hearings for consideration of the governor's appointees to the State Commission for Human Rights.

[2:23:25 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN opened public testimony on the confirmation hearings.

[2:23:56 PM](#)

LONZO HENDERSON, Appointee, State Commission for Human Rights, testified as an appointee on the State Commission on Human Rights. He shared that he had been an Alaskan for over 50 years with his family. He shared that he began his career with the Department of Corrections as a probation and parole officer and concluded his career as director. He stated that in 2008, he had been appointed to the Alaska Board of Parole. He expressed his belief that all citizens have a right to be treated fairly. He stated that some values can distort a person's point of view, which can affect business operational policy and procedures. He stated that his experience and education would be an asset to the board. In response to a question from the committee, he stated that he is not a current member of the commission.

[2:26:13 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EASTMAN referred to Mr. Henderson's resume [included in the committee packet] and asked him to expound on his status as an instructor in regard to the Alaska Police Standard Council.

MR. HENDERSON, in regard to capsaicin training, clarified that he was an instructor to certify probation and parole officers on the field use of pepper spray.

[2:27:42 PM](#)

MAE MARSH-PRAX, Appointee, State Commission for Human Rights, testified as an appointee to the State Commission for Human Rights. She offered biographical information, describing her family as a blending of races, cultures, ethnicities, and abilities. She stated that she had observed the civil rights movement unfold in the media and in her local community as it occurred. She shared that she is a retired civil rights practitioner, working at Fort Wainwright as an analyst and subsequently as an officer for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. She has worked in conflict resolution in an international arena, and her career concluded as the Deputy Director of Equal Employment Opportunity for the Defense Contract Management Agency. She noted that she had relocated to Alaska and served as the Director of Diversity and Opportunity at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, overseeing civil rights investigations and compliance. She stated that her education and experience would be of benefit to the commission.

[2:31:34 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EASTMAN referred to Ms. Marx-Prax's resume [included in the committee packet] and asked her to expound on her affiliation with the Southern Poverty Law Center.

MS. MARSH-PRAX answered that she had been recognized by the Southern Poverty Law Center for her work in Alaska in an accredited class on race and healing. She described the class as finding ways to bring diverse people together and end divisions.

REPRESENTATIVE EASTMAN, in reference to her work with the U.S. Department of Defense, stated that restrictions exist, such as those imposed by the Hatch Act. He asked, if confirmed, whether she anticipated any limitations in her ability to express her personal opinions.

MS. MARSH-PRAX clarified that she had been employed as a civilian and had not been subject to such restrictions. She stated that she did not anticipate any problems in her ability to express her opinions, if confirmed to the commission.

[2:33:42 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN, after ascertaining there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on the confirmation

hearings for the governor's appointees to the State Commission for Human Rights.

[2:34:18 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EASTMAN expressed personal sensitivity to how applicants would serve, once confirmed. He stated that there had been a former commissioner who had been fired for speaking her opinion. He expressed his hope that appointees may freely express opinions.

[2:35:31 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SNYDER stated that the House Judiciary Standing Committee has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointees and recommends that the following names be forwarded to the joint session for consideration: Lonzo Henderson and Mae Marsh-Prax for the State Commission for Human Rights. She said this does not reflect the intent of any of the members to vote for or against these individuals during any further session for the purposes of confirmation.

CHAIR CLAMAN stated that the names of Lonzo Henderson and Mae Marsh-Prax, appointees for the State Commission for Human Rights, would be forwarded to the joint session.

[2:36:11 PM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:36 p.m.