

February 21, 2017

The Honorable Frank Kotowski
House Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee
34 Mammoth Road, Unit 28
Hooksett, NH 03106-1114
HHSEA@leg.state.nh.us

RE: House bill 478, *An Act prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity*

Dear Chairman Kotowski,

On behalf of the Anti-Defamation League (“ADL”), we write in strong support of H.478, *An Act prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity*. We urge you to swiftly report this bill out favorably in order to provide all citizens of New Hampshire full and explicit protection from discrimination regardless of their gender identity.

Founded in 1913, ADL’s mission is to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all. In recognizing that discrimination against any group threatens equality for all, ADL has consistently advocated for anti-discrimination laws to include protections based on gender identity or expression. In our experience, discrimination against any individual or group of people not only hurts the individual it targets, but negatively impacts the environment in which it arises and the community as a whole. Discrimination based on one’s gender identity or expression is just as pernicious as discrimination based on those categories explicitly prohibited by current law such as race, sex and religion, and should receive equal and unambiguous protection under the law.

House bill 478 would update the state’s existing civil rights laws to provide explicit nondiscrimination protections to transgender individuals in housing, employment and public spaces, such as restaurants and hospitals. It would send a clear message to New Hampshire citizens that all people are entitled to feel safe in their community and to be offered the full protection of the law.

The national economic backlash and harm that North Carolina’s discriminatory anti-LGBT law, commonly still referred to as House Bill 2 (HB2), continues to cause serves as a stark example of how protecting every American from discrimination allows communities and economies to thrive. New Hampshire is currently the only state in New England that does not provide these protections to transgender individuals. And currently, 18 states, Washington D.C. and more than 200 municipalities have full non-discrimination protections in housing, employment, and public spaces. Cities and towns across New Hampshire have similarly passed local non-discrimination laws, resolutions or other measures in support of transgender protections.

It is time that New Hampshire joins these states and municipalities in passing comprehensive non-discrimination protections. No one should be turned away from a public business, evicted from their home, or fired from a job simply because of who they are. Legal equality in New Hampshire is long overdue.

Sincerely,

Robert O. Trestan
Regional Director

cc: Representative Ed Butler, Sponsor