



U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Supports Securing Equal Rights for LGBT Community

June 7, 2019

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, by majority vote, applauds the passage of the Equality Act¹ by the House of Representatives as an important first federal step in securing the equal rights of the LGBT community. The bill amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other civil rights laws to explicitly ban discrimination against LGBT people in public accommodations, education, federally funded programs, employment, housing, credit opportunities, and jury service.²

In a November 2017 report entitled “Working for Inclusion: Time for Congress to Enact Federal Legislation to Address Workplace Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Americans,” the Commission recognized that federal law, properly interpreted, already protects LGBT persons from discrimination in the workplace.³ Given the inconsistent federal court decisions and patchwork of state laws, we found that current law does not provide sufficient protections for LGBT people, and called for federal legislation to specifically affirm protections for LGBT employees from discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation and gender identity.⁴ We further noted that without uniform protections it is possible in some states for a lesbian couple to be married on Saturday and fired on Monday for putting a wedding picture on their desks.⁵

The Commission supports the Equality Act’s confirmation that discrimination against LGBT people violates our nation’s commitment to liberty and equal rights for all. Historians, researchers, and courts have extensively documented the longstanding, pervasive societal and institutional discrimination that harms not only LGBT Americans, but also negatively impacts the quality of life of their children, families, and communities.⁶ Members of the LGBT community continue to face discrimination

¹ Equality Act, H.R. 5, 116th Cong. (2019).

² *Id.*

³ See U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Working for Inclusion: Time for Congress to Enact Federal Legislation to Address Workplace Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Americans, Sept. 2017, https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/docs/LGBT_Employment_Discrimination2017.pdf, p. 72.

⁴ See *id.* at 73.

⁵ See *id.* at 3 (citing Selisse Berry, Founder and CEO at Out and Equal Workplace Advocates, testimony, Briefing Transcript, pp. 158-59).

⁶ See *id.* at 71.

performing even the most basic activities, such as using the restroom, obtaining healthcare, or seeking out housing. All people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, deserve equal civil and human rights and the Commission urges the Senate to also secure the equal rights of LGBT Americans.

Chair Catherine E. Lhamon stated: “Explicit federal statutory protections for LGBT Americans’ civil rights are long overdue. The Commission encourages Congress to take this important next step and ensure that all Americans, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, can live free from discrimination.”

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 51 state Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at state and local levels. The Commission: in our 7th decade, a continuing legacy of influence in civil rights. For information about the Commission, please visit <http://www.usccr.gov> and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).