

November 10, 2009

Re: Support for Employment Non-Discrimination Act

Dear Senators and Representatives:

We, the undersigned, are local and statewide organizations in Illinois that strongly support the federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), which would prohibit discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Together we write to urge your support to ensure final passage in the House/Senate (H.R. 3017 / S. 1584). Specifically, we urge you to co-sponsor this measure, as a majority of the Illinois delegation has already done, vote for it, and oppose any efforts to weaken it.

A clear and unambiguous federal law is needed to fully address the continuing problem of employment discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. While some states, like Illinois, and localities have laws in place to prohibit this type of discrimination, the patchwork of laws in this country remains inadequate. Discrimination is a very real problem that affects lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, leaving them and their families economically vulnerable. For all of these reasons, passage of ENDA remains a top priority for the LGBT community.

As you know, in our state, it is to illegal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in employment. That amendment to the Human Rights Act was passed in 2005, with bipartisan support. Overall, about 40% of the U.S. population lives in one of the 12 states or over 100 localities that prohibits discrimination against LGBT people. But job security should not depend on the state or city in which a person works, and we need a federal law that clearly bans discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Labor Unions and businesses throughout our state, large and small, have implemented policies to prohibit LGBT discrimination, including Abbott, Boeing, Sara Lee, and Walgreens. They have long realized that judging a worker based on qualification and merit, rather than personal characteristics like gender identity or sexual orientation, is a best practice.

The time has come to end workplace discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans. An overwhelming majority of Americans favor equal opportunity for gays and lesbians in the workplace. We hope you will join the majority of Americans in supporting basic fairness in the workplace by supporting ENDA and helping to ensure its passage.

For more information, please contact Bernard Cherkasov, Equality Illinois Chief Executive Officer, (bcherkasov@eqil.org, 773-477-7173) or Rick Garcia, Equality Illinois Director of Public Policy, (rgarcia@eqil.org 312-560-0405).

Sincerely,

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