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THE EQUALITY ACT

Comprehensive Civil Rights Protections for LGBT Americans

THE EQUALITY ACT EXPANDS FEDERAL CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS TO PROHIBIT DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY IN PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS, EDUCATION, FEDERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, EMPLOYMENT, HOUSING, CREDIT, AND FEDERAL JURY SERVICE

The Problem

Despite significant advances, LGBT people across the country remain vulnerable to discrimination on a daily basis and too often have little recourse. With the advent of nationwide marriage equality, in many states, same-sex couples have the right to marry but have no explicit non-discrimination protections. In most states, this means that a same-sex couple could legally marry one day and risk being fired from their jobs, evicted from their apartment, or kicked out of a restaurant the next – simply because of who they are. The current patchwork of protections for LGBT people across the country is inadequate to ensure that everyone is protected from discrimination.

Clear, Consistent Protections Under Federal Civil Rights Law

The Equality Act amends existing federal civil rights laws to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in education, employment, housing, credit, and Federal jury service. The bill also amends existing laws to prohibit discrimination in public accommodations and federal funding on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity. In short, the Equality Act ensures that the same protections our nation has already extended based on characteristics like race and religion are equally available to LGBT people.

Public Accommodations

The Equality Act amends Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to provide basic protections against discrimination in public accommodations on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The Act also expands the list of covered types of public accommodations to be more consistent with those providers and establishments prohibited from engaging in disability discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Federal Funding and Education

The Equality Act amends Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to provide basic protections against discrimination by recipients of federal financial assistance on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Together with the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in Title IV of the Civil Rights Act, this provision prohibits discrimination against LGBT Americans in education.

Employment

The Equality Act amends Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, the Government Employee Rights Act of 1991, and the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995, to provide basic protections against workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. The Act does not alter Title VII's existing exemptions for small businesses, the military, and religious organizations.

Housing

The Equality Act amends the Fair Housing Act to provide basic protections against housing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Credit

The Equality Act amends the Equal Credit Opportunity Act to provide basic protections against credit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Jury Service

The Equality Act amends the Jury Selection and Services Act to provide basic protections against discrimination in federal jury service based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

For further information or to co-sponsor, contact Adrian Snead (4-1614) or Elizabeth Eickelberg (4-7657) with Senator Merkley or Brian Moulton (4-0553) with Senator Baldwin.