

May 15, 2019

Dear Representative:

ACLU Urges YES Vote on H.R. 5, NO Vote on Motion to Recommit

As the House prepares to vote on H.R. 5, the Equality Act, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) strongly urges you to vote YES on the bill and to vote NO on any motion to recommit that may be offered to undermine it. The ACLU will score the vote on final passage and on ANY motion to recommit that would alter any provision of the Equality Act or would otherwise harm civil liberties.



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H.R. 5, the Equality Act, is landmark civil rights legislation. It is grounded in the principle that all people in this country should be able to fully participate in public life and not be judged based on characteristics like sexual orientation or gender identity. Everyone deserves a fair chance to support themselves, provide for their family, and live as their true selves free from the fear of harassment or discrimination. The harsh reality – despite increasing support among the public and representation in popular culture – is that discrimination remains a persistent problem for LGBTQ people across the country. From discrimination and harassment of transgender youth in our nation's schools to older same-sex couples denied housing in retirement communities because of their sexual orientation, this is something that LGBTQ people confront throughout their lives and in every corner of the country.

This is why the Equality Act is so critically important. It would provide LGBTQ people with consistent, explicit, and nationwide nondiscrimination protections across all of the key areas of daily life, including employment, housing, and access to public spaces and services.

The patchwork nature of current laws has left millions of people across the country subject to uncertainty and potential discrimination that impacts their safety, their families, and their day-to-day lives. Around 50% of LGBTQ people in the U.S. – approximately 8 million people – live in states that still lack explicit statewide legal protections, leaving their residents and visitors at risk of discrimination because of who they are.

The Equality Act would also fill significant gaps in our federal civil rights laws. It would do this in several ways including:

- updating and modernizing the scope of public spaces and services covered in current law to include retail stores, services such as banks and legal services, and transportation services, such as airports, taxis, and bus stations; and
- expanding protections from sex discrimination by banning this type of discrimination in public spaces and services and in federally funded programs.

For the first time under federal law, it would be illegal to discriminate against individuals for “shopping while Black” or “flying while Brown.” In addition, with the significant expansion in sex discrimination protections, the routine practice of mechanics charging women more than men for the same car services would be illegal under federal law.

The need for consistent, explicit, and nationwide civil rights protections for LGBTQ people – exactly what the Equality Act would provide – could not be clearer. The ACLU urges a YES vote on H.R. 5, the Equality Act, and a NO vote on any motion to recommit that may be offered to undermine the bill.

Please reach out to Ian Thompson, ACLU senior legislative representative, with any questions at (202) 715-0837 or ithompson@aclu.org.

Sincerely,



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