



Michigan National Organization for Women

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Co-Chairs Laura Reyes Kopack and Rasha Demashkieh
Michigan Civil Rights Commission
110 West Michigan Avenue, Suite 800
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Co-Chairs Reyes Kopack and Demashkieh:

Michigan NOW supports Equality Michigan's request that the Michigan Civil Rights Commission issue an interpretive statement finding that the prohibition on sex discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations found in Michigan's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act includes a prohibition on discrimination based on an individual's gender identity and sexual orientation.

As noted in the original request submitted by Equality Michigan, this interpretive statement is of critical importance to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Michiganders since Michigan does not have a state law that explicitly prohibits anti-LGBT discrimination in employment, housing, or public accommodations. The need for this interpretive statement is demonstrated by previous Civil Rights Commission reports that concluded discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is significant and has negative economic consequences for our state. Adding this interpretive statement would also address the gap in coverage under Title VII of the Federal Civil Rights Act that leaves individuals who work for employers with fewer than 15 employees unprotected. This gap leaves many individuals and families in Michigan vulnerable to discrimination that can devastate them personally and professionally.

Issuing an inclusive interpretative statement would be a positive step in working to ensure that all people receive the guarantees against discrimination that are included in our state constitution. It would act to deter further discrimination in our state and provide targets of discrimination with an avenue to seek justice. It would also send a clear statement that the state of Michigan stands for fair and equal treatment for all of its citizens. Michigan NOW firmly stands with Equality Michigan in asking for full equality for the people of Michigan.

Thank you for your consideration,

Nina Muckenthaler, President
Michigan Chapter, National Organization for Women