



May 14, 2019

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Member of Congress:

People For the American Way (PFAW) and its more than 1.5 million supporters nationwide strongly support the principle that promoting gender equity, including equality and recognition for transgender, gender-expansive, and all LGBTQ+ people, is critical to achieving our vision of a vibrant democratic society that works for all of us. PFAW is thus an enthusiastic endorser of H.R. 5, the Equality Act. We thank Rep. Cicilline and the bill's cosponsors for their leadership. We urge all members to vote in favor of this landmark legislation.

PFAW strongly agrees with the courts that have held that existing federal sex discrimination laws already protect LGBTQ+ people from discrimination, but we also know that the Equality Act is necessary to affirm those protections and ensure that they apply consistently nationwide. The Equality Act adds affirmative protections for sexual orientation and gender identity to such federal laws as the Civil Rights Act, the Fair Housing Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, and the Jury Selection and Service Act.

The Equality Act also updates federal public accommodations law to include protections against sex discrimination, which isn't currently covered by this particular part of the law, and adds more public services to better reflect how people participate in today's society. The additional services include retail stores, transportation services like airports, taxis, and bus stations, and service providers like accountants and attorneys.

Finally, the Equality Act restores the original intent of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which was to prevent the government from abridging religious freedom. In the 26 years since its enactment, RFRA has increasingly been misused by individuals to harm others, discriminate against them, and take away their rights. The Equality Act states that RFRA does not provide an exemption from federal civil rights laws.

When the Equality Act is debated on the House floor, members must ensure that the bill does what it's intended to do: strengthen federal civil rights protections for every person in America. PFAW will strongly oppose any effort to weaken either the Equality Act or any existing law that it would amend. Members should support procedural safeguards that protect existing civil rights laws and oppose any motion to recommit.

The Equality Act recognizes that every American deserves full and equal rights under the law. PFAW urges members to vote for H.R. 5.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jen Herrick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jen Herrick
Senior Policy Analyst