

June 29, 2017

The Honorable Senator Ricardo Lara
State Capitol, Room 5050
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for SB 396 – Transgender Work Opportunity Act

Dear Senator Lara:

The Sacramento LGBT Community Center strongly supports SB 396 (Lara), which would require employers with 50 or more employees to provide training and education regarding harassment based on gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation to all supervisory employees. Additionally, the bill would require employers to post a department poster with information on transgender civil rights in their workplaces. Creating affirming workplaces is a critical step in empowering LGBTQ+ people to not only be safe and welcome in California, but able to thrive.

California has the most comprehensive set of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender non-discrimination civil rights protections of any state in America, and yet transgender Californians in particular continue to be left behind. Transgender workers disproportionately experience discrimination in hiring, promotion, demotion, termination, restrictions on their gender expression, and hostility in their workplace. Studies indicate that transgender people are the most economically marginalized with twice the poverty rate of the general population and an unemployment rate of 70%; a staggering 90% report harassment, mistreatment and discrimination on the job.¹

Despite the legal protections afforded to LGBTQ Californians, we are often contacted by employees that not only face violence and discrimination in their places of worship, schools, and communities, but also face significant discrimination in the workplace, as they attempt to support themselves and their families. We also hear from business owners and managers who do not know the law, what affirming company policies look like, or how to properly support an employee or customer going through transition. Many are eager to learn but have not been educated.

SB 396 establishes California as a national leader in transgender civil rights protections by expanding existing sexual harassment training laws to specifically include topics on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation-based discrimination and harassment. Employment opportunities for LGBTQ+ workers, especially transgender people of color, will only become more equitable to the rest of Californians if workplaces become more affirming of their identities.

For all the foregoing reasons, the Sacramento LGBT Community Center strongly supports SB 396.

Sincerely,



David Heitstuman
Executive Director

¹ Williams Institute Employment Discrimination Report: "California – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Law and Documentation of Discrimination." <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/California.pdf>. September 2009.