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## **Support SB12, SB67, HB179, HB300, HB 913- LGBT Virginians deserve the same opportunities as everyone else.**

**All Virginians, including those who are gay or transgender, should be treated fairly and equally under the law.** Under current Virginia law, it is legal to fire, deny housing, or refuse service at a public business to LGBT people based entirely on who they are. These bills would codify for the first time state laws that protect employees from discrimination on the job and extend fair housing protections to LGBT people.

**We need clear, comprehensive, and secure nondiscrimination protections in Virginia that eliminate confusion for workers, students, schools, and businesses alike.** While the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, the U.S. Department of Justice, and a growing number of federal courts have recognized that sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination are forms of unlawful sex discrimination, there is not yet a clear and explicit federal law that protects gay and transgender people, and there is no protection at all in public accommodations.

**These bills are good for business.** Passing strong nondiscrimination protections would help ensure that Virginia can attract new businesses and jobs, and promote tourism. Corporate America knows that basic fairness is good for business: 89 percent of Fortune 500 companies have nondiscrimination policies that include sexual orientation, and 66 percent also cover gender identity.<sup>1</sup>

**LGBT people are our friends, neighbors, family, and coworkers.** When it comes to being able to earn a living or be served by a business or government office, they should be treated like everyone else. Treating others as we would want to be treated ourselves includes making sure that no one is fired from their job, evicted from their home, or turned away from a business just because of who they are.

**Strong non-discrimination protections will bring Virginia in line with other states.** Anti-discrimination laws that prohibit adverse treatment on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity already cover much of the population of the United States.<sup>2</sup> The numerous states and localities that have already implemented such provisions have done so successfully, without inundation by litigation and without infringement on private expression and religious activities. It's time Virginia followed their example.

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Campaign, *Equality at the Fortune 500*, <http://www.hrc.org/resources/lgbt-equality-at-the-fortune-500>.

<sup>2</sup> As of December 2015, 22 states and over 200 localities explicitly ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or both. See ACLU, *Nondiscrimination Laws: State by State*, <https://www.aclu.org/map/non-discrimination-laws-state-state-information-map>; Movement Advancement Project, *Local Employment Nondiscrimination Ordinances*, [http://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/non\\_discrimination\\_ordinances](http://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/non_discrimination_ordinances).