



**TO: House Committee on Business and Labor**

**FR: Maura C. Roche, Government Relations Consultant, Basic Rights Oregon**

**DA: March 11, 2013**

**RE: Support for HB 2669**

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Chair Doherty, Members of the Committee:

Basic Rights Oregon supports HB 2669. As Oregon's largest gay and transgender advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring all Oregonians and their families can live and work free of the sting of discrimination, we strongly support efforts to extend basic workplace protections to interns.

Currently employees are protected from workplace discrimination under ORS 659A. However, the definition of "employee" is fairly narrow and leaves out certain segments of the workforce from these protections, for instance, interns are not expressly covered under the definition of "employee" and therefore are not protected from workplace discrimination. Therefore, even if an intern were to file a claim of workplace discrimination with the Bureau of Labor and Industries, the Commissioner may not have the authority to investigate the complaints or the authority of civil enforcement.

While interns are not considered employees and are therefore not protected, they often perform the same tasks and responsibilities in the workplace as employees. If we already have a standard in place for employees, it should not be very difficult or burdensome to extend those standards to all who do work in the same settings.

Basic Rights Oregon knows only too well that workplace discrimination can be a common occurrence for gay or transgender workers, and interns in particular are left without recourse to address workplace abuses against them. Also, many college students, especially those majoring or specializing in practical trades such as nursing or architecture are required to complete an internship in order to graduate. In some cases, these student interns have little or no control over where their internship placement is sited and cannot switch their internship even if they wanted to. This can lead to interns being put in vulnerable situations where they have few options.

Under the current law students can be forced to endure discrimination directed against them at the place they intern or risk not graduating in their given field. At a time when the state of Oregon is struggling to address improvements and access to higher education, failing to extend basic workplace protections to interns only creates greater challenges in this area.

House Bill 2669 extends basic workplace protections to interns and would allow students participating in internships to know they are legally protected from workplace discrimination.

**Basic Rights Oregon supports HB 2669 and we urge the Committee to move it forward.**