



**TO: Senate Education and Workforce Development Committee**  
**FR: Jeana Frazzini, Executive Director, Basic Rights Oregon**  
**DA: May 23, 2013**  
**RE: Support for HB 2995**

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Chair Hass and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2995. My name is Jeana Frazzini, and I serve as the Executive Director for Basic Rights Oregon. Basic Rights Oregon is the statewide advocacy organization for the gay, transgender and allied community. We represent tens of thousands of Oregonians from every corner of this state. **We strongly urge passage of HB 2995.**

Just six years ago, it was perfectly legal to fire, evict or expel Oregonians solely because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Passage of the Oregon Equality Act in 2007, which banned discrimination on the basis of housing, employment, and public accommodations, ushered in a new era in Oregon. Now, LGBT Oregonians can come out in the workplace, at school, or in public without fear of losing their home, their job or their education. With explicit discrimination prohibited in the state, LGBT Oregonians and our allies have begun to focus not simply on explicit discrimination, but on the disparities that our communities are facing.

We've seen incredible change in recent years, and we've still got a long way to go—especially with regard to the striking disparities faced by LGBT students and youth. Nationally, nearly one third of LGBT students drop out of high school—nearly three times the national average.<sup>1</sup> 1 in 5 transgender people experience homelessness, and homeless LGBT youth represent up to 40% of those on the street.<sup>2</sup> And nearly 85% of LGBT students experience verbal harassment.<sup>3</sup>

These disparities extend to life on campus, too. According to *Too Afraid to Learn*, a 2008 survey of over 3,500 Oregon college students, a hostile campus climate has a significant impact on gay and transgender students. One in ten gay and transgender students took more than five years to graduate due to anti-LGBT sentiment. Over half of gay and transgender students concealed their sexual orientation on campus for fear of personal safety, discrimination or rejection. And more than sixty percent of all students reported witnessing instances of homophobia, ranging from homophobic language to violence.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://data.lambdalegal.org/pdf/158.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Durso-Gates-LGBT-Homeless-Youth-Survey-July-2012.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/groups/lgbt/white\\_house\\_conference\\_materials.pdf](http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/groups/lgbt/white_house_conference_materials.pdf)

While this data is troubling, it's now five years old. Since then, we've passed the Oregon Safe Schools Act, which banned bullying. Data collection like the systems proposed in HB 2995 will be essential to track our progress on these key measures.

Clear, consistent data collection would allow Oregon colleges and universities to more accurately assess and appropriately address the experiences of gay and transgender students, faculty and staff. HB 2995 would allow students, faculty and staff to voluntarily identify their sexual orientation on forms collecting demographic information about gender, race and ethnicity, without mandating collection. And the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act would govern this information in the same manner that other education records are protected at public colleges, universities and community colleges. HB 2995 is a simple, safe, effective way to gather strong local data on the experiences of gay and transgender students, faculty and staff.

HB 2995 allows colleges and universities to replicate successes and address disparities—and that strengthens Oregon colleges for ALL students. **Basic Rights Oregon supports HB 2995 and we urge you to move the bill to a floor vote with a do pass recommendation.**