



## Basic Rights Oregon Testimony in Support of SB 577

March 7, 2019

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee:

My name is Nancy Haque and I'm the Executive Director of Basic Rights Oregon. We are an organization that advocates for public policy that meets the needs of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) communities, and centers on racial and transgender justice. Protecting our communities is why I'm here today testifying in support of SB 577 on behalf of Basic Rights Oregon.

The Southern Poverty Law Center reports that Oregon was 11<sup>th</sup> in total hate crimes reported in the ten days following the presidential election. These statistics didn't stop in 2016. Within the past month, many LGBTQ Portland residents reported being physically attacked because of their gender identity and it has caused a ripple effect of fear throughout the LGBTQ community. As a result of these horrendous incidents, the fight against hate crimes has a renewed focus.

We appreciate the Attorney General's office for their creation of the Task Force on Hate Crimes and the tremendous amount of work the Task Force has conducted to listen to residents throughout Oregon. We firmly support their recommendations and the -1 amendment before you today. We are particularly supportive of the effort to clarify that gender identity is included in the bias crime statute. There is indication that individuals victimized for their gender identity are the fastest growing type of hate crime. The numbers are alarming when considered simply as statistics. But the reality is that there are people behind each of those numbers, and these numbers only represent crimes that are reported and recognized as hate crimes.

We have seen at least one case where the ambiguity of whether gender identity is included in statute meant that the case did not move forward. It's not surprising, then, that community members cited "insufficient law enforcement response" as their number one frustration when dealing with hate crime incidents. If victims do not believe their experiences will be treated with the appropriate gravity and response, how can they be expected to report? SB 577 is especially important because it will create a service-driven, culturally competent system of response to report both hate crimes and hate incidents. Equally important, it will also provide support from the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division if a victim's case is not prosecuted.

SB 577 is a comprehensive, impactful step forward in Oregon's fight against hate and bias crime. We strongly encourage you to support SB 577 with the -1 amendment so that we can send a clear, resounding message that hate has no place in Oregon.

Thank you for your time.

Nancy Haque

Executive Director