



April 30, 2021

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chairs Noble and Power, and members of the committee,

We at Basic Rights Oregon are writing in support of one of our priority bills, Senate Bill 704, the ban on LGBTQ panic defenses here in Oregon. We are the leading LGBTQ advocacy group in Oregon, and from our work in the community, we cannot stress the importance of this bill enough.

To be clear, this legislation is vital for our community's safety. In Oregon, we have made incredible strides towards LGBTQ equality through the legislation and community advocacy. Yet, since 2016, we have seen an increase in violence against LGBTQ individuals across the state and many of our community members have reported being physically attacked because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Black trans women have suffered disproportionately, as a majority of the 44 transgender and gender non-conforming people who were killed in 2020 were Black trans women. And, within the past two years, two Black trans women in Portland—Tete Gulley and Aja Raquell Rhone Spears—died from violence.

Young people are also at risk. In 2019, just across the river from Portland, a Vancouver teen, Nikki Kuhnhausen, was strangled to death after her killer made a sexual advance and discovered she was transgender.

These violent attacks against our community members are an epidemic and need a strong response, which is why twelve states and Washington D.C. currently ban the LGBTQ panic defense. Oregon should be next in setting the standard for the safety of the LGBTQ community.

Washington state is one of the most recent states to join this list, which passed Nikki's Law after Nikki Kuhnhausen (mentioned above) was murdered. So we know that this kind of legislation can work in Oregon.

Oregon is recognized as the second strongest state for LGBTQ equality, and with this ban on LGBTQ panic defenses, we can ensure that our friends and neighbors truly feel safe and welcome, no matter who they love or how they identify.

We call on you to please support the LGBTQ community's safety and pass this LGBTQ panic defense ban.

Thank you for your time and consideration.