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Arizona lawmakers introduce bipartisan LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination bill

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This week, a group of bipartisan legislators introduced HB 2586, which would extend Arizona's current non-discrimination protections to gay and transgender Arizonans in employment, housing and public accommodations.

This is the first time a LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination bill has had bipartisan support at the Arizona Legislature, according to a press release.

State Rep. Daniel Hernandez (D, LD 2) is sponsoring the bill and State Rep. César Chávez (D, LD 29), State Rep. Tony Navarette (D, LD 30) and State Sen. Kate Brophy McGee (R, LD 28) are co-sponsoring the bill.

Currently, five municipalities have ordinances that ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Arizona, however, has no statewide laws that protect gay and transgender individuals from being fired, denied housing or refused service simply for being gay or transgender.

"Inclusion is not just good for LGBTQ Arizonans, but for all Arizonans," Rep. Hernandez said in a prepared statement. "Being inclusive contributes to our economic sustainability and our ability to attract and retain top talent and business. It also happens to be the right thing to."

Sen. Brophy McGee said the principles of non-discrimination are based in conservative values of fairness, equality and opportunity.

*"If we want to live in a state that grows by attracting the very best talent, has a strong economy, is a vibrant place to live, then we must be for business to everyone," Sen. Brophy McGee said in a prepared statement.*

The business community is strongly in favor of the legislation, a release states.

More than 2,600 businesses in Arizona have already voiced their support for LGBTQ inclusive non-discrimination by signing the UNITY Pledge. Further, 88 percent of Arizona's top 50 employers include sexual orientation and gender identity in their non-discrimination policies.

And it's not just Arizona. Businesses across the country are increasingly considering non-discrimination protections when deciding where to do business.

In the last two years, both CNBC and Forbes Magazine have added LGBTQ rights as priority criteria in their annual best states for business lists. National organizations like the NCAA

announced that they will consider LGBTQ rights when awarding cities with championship games going forward.

Some faith leaders are also supporting the measure,

“My faith teaches us that we are all God’s children, and that we should treat others the way we want to be treated,” Reverend Troy Mendez, Dean of Trinity Cathedral, said in a prepared statement. “The legislation will simply update Arizona’s existing laws to ensure that our LGBTQ citizens are all treated equally and fairly.”

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