



July 24, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Merkley:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), I am writing to express our Academy's support for **S. 1006, the Equality Act**. AAFP, which represents 129,000 physicians and medical students across the country, strongly supports this legislation.

The AAFP opposes all discrimination in any form, including but not limited to that based on actual or perceived race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic affiliation, health, age, disability, economic status, body habitus, or national origin.

Despite significant steps forward, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) Americans lack basic legal protections in states across the country. The patchwork nature of current laws leaves millions of people subject to uncertainty and potential discrimination that impacts their safety, their health, their family, and their very way of life.

Your bill amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity among the prohibited categories of discrimination or segregation in places of public accommodation, and would provide consistent and explicit non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people across key areas of life, including employment, housing, credit, education, public spaces and services, federally funded programs, and jury service. These important updates would strengthen existing protections for everyone.

Decades of civil rights history show that civil rights laws are effective in decreasing discrimination because they provide strong federal remedies targeted to specific vulnerable groups. By explicitly including sexual orientation and gender identity in these fundamental laws, LGBTQ people will finally be afforded the exact same protections as other covered characteristics under federal law. For these reasons, the AAFP is proud to support S. 1006.

Sincerely,

Wanda D. Filer, MD, MBA, FAAFP
Board Chair

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