



June 9, 2016

Subject: Critical HB2 update and ask.

Business leaders,

Thank you for standing shoulder to shoulder with us in the more than two months since North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory, Senate President Phil Berger, House Speaker Tim Moore, and other lawmakers rammed through a vile law that has stripped protections from millions of LGBTQ people, minorities, women, veterans, and others across the state. Today, we ask you to continue your steadfast commitment to ensuring the law's full repeal and securing statewide protections, particularly as we hear talk of backroom deals that would keep the harmful aspects of this deeply discriminatory HB2 law intact.

In the time since HB2's passage McCrory, Berger, and Moore have refused to comply with federal civil rights laws; they have refused to listen to the majority of North Carolinians who oppose this bill; and they have refused to listen to you as leaders in the business community. They have also refused to release public records detailing how and why HB2 was passed -- which we believe would expose their explicit aim to discriminate. And, they have pointed fingers everywhere else to avoid taking responsibility for the damage they've caused, laying the blame with businesses, Congress, the Department of Justice, HRC and the LGBTQ community itself, the Charlotte City Council, Attorney General Roy Cooper -- and the list goes on.

With only a few weeks left in North Carolina's legislative special session, time is running out for these lawmakers to fix the crisis they alone created. Unfortunately, to date, state lawmakers have been unwilling to seriously approach finding a solution, instead looking for a face-saving 'way out' in these final days that would make the situation in North Carolina even worse for millions of people across the state.

As a reminder, North Carolina is a state with no statewide LGBTQ nondiscrimination protections. HB2 took North Carolina even farther in the wrong direction by undoing what few protections existed at the local level. **First**, HB2 pre-empted municipal laws in order to block LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination ordinances like Charlotte's from being enacted anywhere in the state. **Second**, it stripped away the ability of workers to sue in state court when they have been discriminated against on the basis of race, sex, age, religion, or disability. And **third**, it has specifically barred transgender people from accessing certain restrooms and other public facilities in accordance with their gender identity.

Any one of these three provisions is catastrophic on its own. Leaving any one of these provisions intact means sacrificing the rights of LGBTQ people, women, communities of color, veterans, people of faith, or all of the above. Yet, astonishingly, there has been no serious consideration by the governor and legislative leaders of any measure to fully repeal HB2. Instead, we believe lawmakers -- without the LGBTQ community at the table -- are looking to push another discriminatory bill in a backroom deal that will inevitably leave some of us behind and leave the state worse off.

There is absolutely no legitimate reason to withhold equal rights and protections from the LGBTQ community. For years, advocacy organizations like ours have worked alongside business leaders like you to advance comprehensive non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people in cities and states all across the country. In fact, Minneapolis first passed these protections in 1975, and more than one hundred major American cities and 18 states that have passed similar protections in the four decades since. These states and municipalities, many of which are included on a list attached to this letter, have ensured the safety and equality of the LGBTQ community -- as well as women and communities of color -- and cover at least 145 million Americans without doing one iota of harm to anyone else.

So, when the same North Carolina lawmakers who passed HB2 put forward something they cynically spin as a “deal,” we urge you to ask them -- as we will -- who they propose leaving behind.

In our long fight for equality, we have often been required to take measured steps toward progress. This case is something altogether different: in passing HB2, lawmakers have taken us back into the dark ages. Even a full repeal of HB2 would only get us back to square one without statewide protections. Not only that, stopping short of full repeal will leave North Carolina less competitive economically. The NCAA, for example, has vowed it will no longer hold events in cities that lack comprehensive non-discrimination protections, and major corporate leaders have announced they will not come to North Carolina until the LGBTQ community is protected equally under the law. Yet, repealing HB2 or establishing statewide protections are measures the General Assembly has -- so far -- been unwilling to consider.

We therefore ask you to be skeptical of anyone trying to sell you on a half-measure that leaves any portion of HB2 in place. The truth is HB2 was passed and signed in less than 12 hours and can be repealed just as quickly -- if lawmakers are willing to come to the table.

On behalf of millions of LGBTQ people in North Carolina and across the country, we ask that you continue to stand with us and accept nothing short of full repeal of HB2. Any “deal” that does not have the support of those most gravely impacted is no deal at all. This is a fight for full rights and full equality and it should be acceptable to no one that this debate is devolving into which and how many of our rights can be taken away. We should instead be working toward establishing nondiscrimination protections that cover LGBTQ people statewide.

When you spoke out as business leaders against HB2, the world took notice. We respectfully urge you to continue standing resolutely alongside us until HB2 is fully repealed.

Sincerely,

Chris Sgro, Executive Director, Equality North Carolina
Mara Keisling, Executive Director, National Center for Transgender Equality
Chad Griffin, President, Human Rights Campaign

LGBTQ Nondiscrimination Protections Across America

Eighteen U.S. states, the District of Columbia and most major American cities offer public accommodation protections to their transgender citizens, including:

States:

California
Colorado
Connecticut
Delaware
Hawaii
Illinois
Iowa
Maine
Maryland
Minnesota
Nevada
New Jersey
New Mexico
New York
Oregon
Rhode Island
Vermont
Washington

Major Cities:

Anchorage, Alaska
Phoenix, Arizona
Tempe, Arizona
Tucson, Arizona
Fayetteville, Arkansas
Oakland, California
Sacramento, California
San Diego, California
San Francisco, California
West Hollywood, California
Boulder, Colorado
Denver, Colorado
Gainesville, Florida
Orlando, Florida
Tampa, Florida
Atlanta, Georgia
Boise, Idaho
Pocatello, Idaho
Aurora, Illinois
Bloomington, Indiana
Indianapolis, Indiana
South Bend, Indiana

Ames, Iowa
Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Davenport, Iowa
Des Moines, Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa
Sioux City, Iowa
Waterloo, Iowa
Lawrence, Kansas
Louisville, Kentucky
Shreveport, Louisiana
Baltimore, Maryland
College Park, Maryland
Boston, Massachusetts
Cambridge, Massachusetts
Kansas City, Missouri
Missoula, Montana
Dallas, Texas
Madison, Wisconsin