



Chairs Klevorn, Nash, and committee members,

The Council on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans works for the implementation of economic, social, legal, and political equality for Minnesota's community of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender expansive, queer, intersex, asexual, and/or two-spirit. The Council is writing today in support of HF 501, the Minnesota Equal Rights Amendment.

Minnesota has long been a leader in anti-discrimination laws and human rights protections for the LGBTQIA2S+ community. In 1993, Minnesota became the first state in the country to ban discrimination against transgender people with passage of the Minnesota Human Rights Act. Similarly, in 2012, we became the first (and only) state to reject a "same-sex marriage" ban in our state constitution, demonstrating that decisions about fundamental rights belong with the people.

Over the last 32 years, the Minnesota Human Rights Act has been considered one of the strongest human rights laws in the country; however, the anti-discrimination protections found in the Human Rights Act are not yet reflected in the language of our state constitution. HF 501 seeks to provide legal clarity by embedding these protections at the constitutional level. The amendment, if approved by voters, would reduce ambiguity in how the law is applied and interpreted and provides clear guidance to courts, public institutions, and employers across Minnesota, helping ensure consistent protections for all Minnesotans. Advancing this amendment to the ballot does not make the decision for voters – it creates space for a public, statewide conversation about equality and fairness under the law, which is especially critical as legal challenges to LGBTQIA2S+ rights grow. The Council, made up of public voting members from Minnesota's LGBTQIA2S+ communities, represents a constituency whose voices have not always been heard or protected in the law. Our work centers on ensuring that LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans have a seat at the table when decisions are made that affect their lives. This Council knows firsthand the value of engaging communities in shaping public policy – especially something as foundational as the state constitution. For that reason, we support not only the language of the proposed amendment, but also the decision to bring it to Minnesota voters. Advancing HF501 to the ballot affirms that decisions about fundamental rights should reflect the will of the people and the lived experiences of those most impacted. We urge the committee to pass HF 501 and give Minnesotans the opportunity to enshrine explicit anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals in our state constitution.

Sincerely,

Emma Watts
Executive Director, Council on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans
Website: mn.gov/lgbtqia2s/
Email: emma.watts@state.mn.us