

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE ANDY JOSEPHSON

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 82: Prohibiting Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression

Historically, Alaska has been a forerunner for human rights. We passed our Civil Rights Act almost two decades before the national act of 1964. Yet, we don't protect the civil rights of LGBTQ Alaskans. This population continues to lack protection from discrimination in housing, financing, employment, and public accommodations—protections we afford to all other Alaskans.

House Bill 82 resembles laws passed in 21 other states that provide equal protection against discrimination. HB 82 adds "sexual orientation, gender identity and expression" to the list of classes protected under current Alaska law, which includes "race, religion, color, national ancestry, physical or mental disability, age, sex, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, or parenthood."

In 2016, the Alaska State Commission on Human Rights passed a resolution urging the legislature to make the very change proposed by this legislation, given the commission lacks authority to address discrimination of this kind. We have yet to assist this vulnerable population.

All Alaskans should enjoy the right to participate in commerce and live active lives in our communities, free from restrictions based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Such restrictions harm our state and harm the dignity of Alaskans.

Additionally, HB 82 includes a ministerial exemption to protect the constitutional right to free exercise of religious institutions in our state.

At no cost to the state, HB 82 will strengthen civil rights statutes to include one of the fastest growing communities in Alaska, make our state more attractive to workers, and shape Alaska, once again, into a shining model of human rights advocacy in the United States of America.

I encourage you to support this legislation and urge you to reach out to my office with any questions or concerns.