

*City of Alexandria, Virginia***MEMORANDUM**

DATE: NOVEMBER 21, 2019

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR, MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: COUNCILMAN MO SEIFELDEIN

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS CODE AMENDMENT

The City of Alexandria's Human Rights Code aims to protect against discrimination on the basis "of race, color, sex, religion, ancestry, national origin, marital status, familial status, age, sexual orientation or disability."¹ This stays true to our vision as a City, as we are "committed to making our city an inclusive city of kindness" to ensure that all of our residents are safe and are thriving economically, socially, and politically.² However, our nondiscrimination laws do not include safeguards for gender identity and transgender status. As such, the City fails to extend the same protections to *all* of our residents and those working in our community.

Currently, there are 22 states that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation.³ In 2018, the City of Richmond took a firm stance on extending protections to all of their residents by amending their Human Rights Code to include "transgender status or gender identity."⁴ Along with Richmond, there are 21 states and Washington, D.C. that prohibit discrimination based on gender identity.⁵ Given this precedent, Council has the moral obligation to amend the Alexandria Human Rights Code to make it more inclusive to gender identity and transgender status. We must do what is right without hesitation.

Having an entire group of individuals face abhorrent inequality, discrimination, and intolerance impacts their ability to seek opportunities and peace of mind within our community. Employment and healthcare discrimination, violence, and harassment plague gender minorities and transgender individuals, which sets many within this community back when compared to others in Alexandria.⁶ We need to make swift strides in protecting our residents because no one should be treated differently because of who they are, what they choose to identify as, and who they chose to be with.

We must take the right approach by staying true to the City's values and approach to fairness, equality, and justice. The only way that we can ensure this is to use our platform to relentlessly advocate for everyone's protection, especially in a climate where gender minorities and transgender individuals need it the most. We must empower these communities by having legal safeguards for gender identity and transgender status.

¹ [Alexandria City Code § 12-4-2.](#)

² [Alexandria City Strategic Plan FY 2017-2022.](#)

³ [Vox Media, "The Supreme Court Showdown Over LGBTQ discrimination, explained."](#)

⁴ [Richmond City Code § 17-1 and 17-2.](#)

⁵ [Human Rights Campaign, "State Maps and Policies."](#)

⁶ [Human Rights Campaign, "Understanding the Transgender Community."](#)

With that in mind, I ask for your support in amending our Human Rights Code to ensure that it is just and inclusive to gender identity and transgender status.

I will propose amending the Human Rights Code during Orals at the November 26 Legislative Meeting and to be introduced at the December 10 Legislative Meeting.

With your support, I hope to have this passed at the December 14 Public Hearing.

cc: Mark B. Jinks, City Manager
Joanna Anderson, City Attorney
Jean Kelleher, Director, Office of Human Rights
Francisco Duran, Chair, Human Rights Commission