

United States Senate

March 18, 2021

Dear Jim,

Thank you for contacting me regarding the Equality Act. I appreciate your thoughts on this issue and welcome the opportunity to respond.

On February 18, 2021, Representative David Cicilline (D-RI) introduced H.R.5 to add sexual orientation and gender identity to other protected classes in existing federal laws. Federal law prohibits discrimination against people on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, disability, and national origin. This protection originates from the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution and is codified by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Among other things, the Equality Act would amend the Civil Rights Act to include sex, sexual orientation and gender identity among the prohibited categories of discrimination or segregation. As noted below, I have deep reservations about key aspects of this bill.

On June 15, 2020, the Supreme Court ruled in *Bostock v. Clayton County* that the prohibition on discrimination based on sex found in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 extends to sexual orientation or transgender status. The principle this decision focused on is one I have long agreed with – that Americans shouldn't be able to be fired from a job simply because of their religion, race, or sexual orientation. I am committed to the principle of non-discrimination and enforcement of laws providing equality for all Americans. The Equality Act, however, significantly expands beyond employment and I have deep reservations about it.

In particular, I strongly believe in protecting freedom of religion and religious liberty, which is guaranteed by our Constitution as well. We must ensure that the sincerely held religious beliefs of Americans and the institutions in America that are founded upon such beliefs, such as houses of worship and religious schools and universities, are not infringed upon.

On February 25, 2021, H.R.5 passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 211 to 195. H.R.5 will now be considered by the Senate. As the discussion on the Equality Act continues in the Senate, I will keep your views in mind and work toward policies that can ensure non-discrimination while also preserving freedom of religion.

Thank you again for contacting me on this issue. I hope you and your family find yourselves healthy and well during these challenging times. I am confident that Alaska and America will emerge stronger and more resilient as we all work together to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. If you have any more questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me or my staff. My office can be reached at 202-224-3004 or online at www.sullivan.senate.gov.

Sincerely,



Dan Sullivan
United States Senator