



June 12, 2018

TO: Members of the PA House Labor and Industry Committee
FROM: John Dawe, CNP, CFRE, Executive Director, Equality Pennsylvania
RE: **HB 861 (2018)**

Dear Representatives,

On behalf of Equality Pennsylvania and hundreds of thousands of LGBTQ Pennsylvanians, I urge you to oppose House Bill 861. If passed, this legislation would stop local governments from making decisions that best meet the needs of their economy, businesses, workforce, and communities. When state lawmakers prevent communities from passing economic policies that work for them, they hinder economic growth and development.

HB 861 prohibits municipalities from passing or enforcing laws regarding employer policies and practices. These laws would include policies such as paid sick days laws, pay equity, sexual harassment, ban the box, protection from discrimination, and other important provisions.

Of importance to the LGBTQ community is the fact that this law would prohibit municipalities from passing or enforcing local ordinances that protect LGBTQ citizens from discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations as well as other local laws that protect the lives of LGBTQ individuals, especially youth.

Pennsylvanians decided a long time ago that local democracies are best qualified to address and solve the problems in their communities and reflect the views and values unique to their neighborhoods. HB 861 would strip local governments of their authority to pass local laws to help citizens where they live, work, and play. Communities would be forced to wait years for state government to act when the health and safety of their own residents are at risk.

For example, the Pennsylvania legislature has failed to pass the Pennsylvania Fairness Act for nearly a decade. Every other state in the Northeastern United States has passed a statewide law protecting LGBTQ citizens from discrimination. Pennsylvania remains the sole outlier. As a result of the legislature's failure to act, nearly fifty municipalities across the Commonwealth local ordinances have created fair and equal communities. This includes at fifteen municipalities who have passed ordinances in the past three years that would be swiftly overturned by HB 861.

Local interference will have unforeseen and costly consequences. HB 861 is likely to lead to confusion and litigation as the court system sorts through challenges to existing ordinances this law may or may not have invalidated.

When state legislators stop communities from passing their own laws or overturn existing laws, they silence the voice of the people, rob local democracies of their power, and hurt the communities' health, safety, and economic wellbeing.

For all these reasons, Equality Pennsylvania urges you to stand with local communities and local government. **Please oppose both amendments to House Bill 861 and the bill itself.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Dawe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and last name "Dawe" clearly legible.

John Dawe, CNP, CFRE
Executive Director
Equality Pennsylvania

CC: House Speaker Mike Turzai
Members, LGBT Equality Caucus
Governor Tom Wolf