

April 23, 2007

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of Lambda Legal and its members, I write to ask for your support of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA).

As a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work, we know full well the effects of employment discrimination on the LGBT community. Discrimination in the workplace is the number one issue for callers to Lambda Legal's Help Desk, with over 1,000 people calling us about workplace rights in 2006. In Lambda Legal's 2005 Workplace Fairness Survey, 39% of respondents reported experiencing some form of discrimination or harassment in the workplace during the past five years because of their sexual orientation.

For more than three decades, workplace fairness has been a top priority for Lambda Legal. The stories of our plaintiffs through the years illustrate the discrimination LGBT people and those with HIV face. Two of the many examples of the need for the passage of ENDA are the lives of Kevin Dunbar and Izza Lopez. As an employee at Footlocker, an athletic footwear and apparel chain, Kevin Dunbar suffered severe antigay harassment and discrimination at the hands of his coworkers, supervisors and a customer at two different South Carolina locations. But when Kevin formally complained, the discrimination intensified and he was eventually fired. Izza Lopez, a 26-year-old transgender woman, accepted a job as a scheduler with River Oaks, a medical imaging company in Houston. After resigning from her position with her then-current employer, Izza received a call from River Oaks rescinding the job offer because of her "misrepresentation" of herself as a woman. ENDA's passage would send a powerful message nationwide that discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity—like that faced by Kevin, Izza and countless others—will not be tolerated under the law.

Despite the fact that nearly 90% of Americans favor equal rights for lesbians and gay men with regard to job opportunities, less than half of all states specifically ban workplace discrimination in the private sector based on sexual orientation and even fewer states expressly ban discrimination based on gender identity. ENDA would ensure that in most workplaces a person's qualifications and job performance, rather than sexual orientation or gender identity, will be the factors that determine success on the job.

Fairness and equal opportunity in employment are fundamental American principles and they should apply to all Americans. We urge you to support ENDA.

Sincerely,



Kevin Cathcart
Executive Director