



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ACLU OF UTAH AND EQUALITY UTAH CELEBRATE SB 296;
REJECT THE HARMFUL PROVISIONS OF HB 322**

SALT LAKE CITY, UT – After seven years of consideration, last night Utah lawmakers passed SB 296, which modifies the Utah Antidiscrimination Act and the Utah Fair Housing Act to address discrimination and religious freedoms by including sexual orientation and gender identity as prohibited bases for unequal treatment. The ACLU of Utah and Equality Utah applaud our state leaders for taking this historic step. Utah now joins the 18 other states, plus Washington D.C., that expressly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

At the same time, the Utah House of Representatives also advanced the so-called “Religious Liberty Act,” HB 322. HB 322 significantly undercuts the protections afforded in SB 296 by expressly allowing for discrimination, not only on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, but also race, religion and other identified groups when done in the name of religion.

“Religious freedom is fundamental, but it doesn’t give anyone the right to harm others,” said Marina Lowe, Legislative and Policy Counsel for the ACLU of Utah. “To use one’s faith as a justification for discrimination is a distortion of both religion and freedom.”

While SB 296 was crafted with the intent of delicately balancing the rights of all Utahns to be treated fairly and equally in housing and employment with the rights of religious organizations to express beliefs, HB 322 was not negotiated in the same fashion.

“When all stakeholders sit around the table to work on legislation, great things transpire. Representative Christensen’s bill violates the spirit and intent of our historic collaboration with the LDS Church on SB296,” said Troy Williams, executive director of Equality Utah. “The LGBT community has never been approached or consulted on any aspect of this bill. This ill conceived legislation would devastate the great accomplishments we have made with SB296.”

Religion does not give us the right to discriminate. Utah must reject HB 322 because it runs counter to SB 296, and because it sanctions discrimination in the name of religion.

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