



**HARRISBURG REGIONAL  
CHAMBER & CREDC<sup>SM</sup>**

**POSITION STATEMENT**

*Changes to Pennsylvania Human Relations Act of 1955*

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**Background**

The current Pennsylvania Human Relations Act prohibits certain practices of discrimination because of race, color, religious creed, ancestry, age or national origin, by employers, employment agencies, labor organizations and others as defined. The Act also created the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission in the Governor's Office; defining its functions, powers and duties; providing for procedure and enforcement; providing for formulation of an educational program to prevent prejudice; providing for judicial review and enforcement and imposing penalties.

There is legislation under consideration in the Pennsylvania General Assembly to add "sexual orientation, gender identity or expression" to the act. Through the Harrisburg Regional Chamber's Business Diversity Council, this has been brought to our attention and action has been requested to support such changes. The Government Relations Committee has reviewed the request, pending legislation and given the number of amendments being introduced is not in a position to make a recommendation on a specific piece of legislation, however has adopted the position below and is recommending adoption from the Board of Directors of the Harrisburg Regional Chamber.

**Recommendation:**

The Harrisburg Regional Chamber & CREDC supports the principle that individuals should not be discriminated against based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The Chamber & CREDC further support amending the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act of 1955 to include that principle. The Chamber & CREDC believes that this organization should help to lead the business community in understanding, educating and accepting diversity of all kinds in the workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Rationale:**

- All individuals should have the right to employment, housing and public accommodation regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Discrimination on any basis, including sexual orientation, must not be condoned and is considered unacceptable behavior in society and specifically in the workplace.
- States surrounding Pennsylvania and many municipalities within the Commonwealth have already implemented ordinances that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Companies throughout the United States have implemented similar policies in order to increase their retention and attraction of talented employees, therefore increasing their competitive edge in attracting and keeping talented employees.

**Date:** May 7, 2009

**Chamber Position:** Support

**Chairs:** Sheilah Borne & Deb Suder

**Committee:** Government Relations

**Harrisburg Regional Chamber Board of Directors:** May 13, 2009