



Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts

Committed to achieving the full and equal participation of women in the legal system and in a just society.

TESTIMONY

In Support of H1728 and S1687, An Act Relative to Gender-Based Discrimination and Hate Crimes

Presented by Darien K. S. Fleming

Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts
before the Joint Committee on the Judiciary
July 14, 2009

The Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts (WBA) supports H1728 and S1687, a bill that would amend the Commonwealth's hate crimes and non-discrimination statutes to explicitly include transgender people by adding "gender identity or expression" as a protected characteristic to Massachusetts statutes governing hate crimes and discrimination in employment, housing, credit, public accommodations, and public education.

The WBA is a professional association of women attorneys and judges, with over 1,500 members across the state. The WBA was founded in 1978 and is one of the largest women's bar associations in the nation. Since 1978, everything the WBA has done has been guided by these simple words: We are committed to the full and equal participation of women in the legal profession and in a just society. Our organization's commitment to creating a just society for all its members compels us to support H1728 and S1687.

No one should face discrimination or violence because of gender identity or expression. H1728 and S1687 will make it clear to employers, landlords, places of public accommodation, public education, the credit industry and transgender people themselves that the Commonwealth will not tolerate discriminatory and violent actions that target our colleagues, neighbors, classmates, family members, and friends because of their transgender identities.

The WBA believes that the protection of individual rights and liberties is a fundamental cornerstone of our society and the protection of those rights is a hallmark of the WBA and its mission.

The WBA urges you to give a favorable report to H1728 and S1687 and to support its passage into law.

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