

## LGBTQ ISSUES & THE 86<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATURE

### PRO-LGBTQ GAINS

The 86th Legislative Session saw the formation of an LGBTQ Legislative Caucus. I am proud to be a member of the Caucus and support its mission of equality and justice for all Texans.

Many of this session's victories came in the form of blocking discriminatory legislation, including SB 17, that would have given licensed professionals— such as doctors, child care providers, and counselors— the ability to deny critical services to LGBTQ persons in the name of religious beliefs. I opposed this bill, as it disguised discrimination as religious protections. The work of the LGBTQ Caucus, and testimonies from businesses such as Amazon, Facebook and Google, showed that discrimination is not only unfair, but bad for our state's economy.

Additionally, [several bills](#) that would add protections for LGBTQ Texans were heard in House committees. Although they did not come to the House floor for votes, this movement was a major step in the right direction. Some of these bills include:

- [HB 517](#) (Rep. Israel) — a ban on conversion therapy
- [HB 85](#) (Rep. M. González) — protections for consensual sexual conduct between same-sex underage couples
- [HB 3281](#) (Rep. Hinojosa) — elimination of the gay/trans panic defense, a legal tactic that allows violence as rational behavior to finding out the victim was LGBTQ
- [HB 2089](#) (Rep. Coleman) — streamlining the process for changing gender markers on official documents
- [HB 244](#) (Rep. Farrar) — statewide nondiscrimination protections for the LGBTQ community
- [HB 1513](#) (Rep. Coleman) — adding gender identity to the James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Act

### CHICK-FIL-A BILL

[SB 1978](#), referred to by supporters as the “Save Chick-fil-A” bill, prevents any government entity from taking adverse actions against a person or organization based on their affiliation with, or contributions to, a religious organization. The seemingly innocuous language of the bill masks potential consequences in which businesses can refuse services to LGBTQ persons based on the owner's religious beliefs.

The reality is the First Amendment to the Constitution already protects religious freedom for all Americans. Therefore, this bill is unnecessary and allows government-sanctioned discrimination. I actively opposed this measure on the floor and delivered a speech in opposition to the bill, which [you can watch by clicking here](#). Unfortunately, this measure passed both chambers and will take effect on September 1, 2019.

Although we were able to fend off some of the most discriminatory measures and make some gains for LGBTQ Texans, there is still much to do. I will continue to fight discrimination in Texas and work towards equality for everyone.