



PROPOSED REFORMS TO THE PENNSYLVANIA HUMAN RELATIONS ACT POSITION STATEMENT

BACKGROUND:

The Lancaster Chamber is committed to ensuring the best environment for employers and employees and is dedicated to growing the Lancaster County economy.

As part of that commitment, The Chamber believes that the inclusiveness of our County's workplaces, housing and public accommodations is an essential ingredient for the continued success of Lancaster. A community is best positioned to attract and retain a vibrant and talented workforce when it is viewed as welcoming to all.

In working toward this end, The Chamber has a long-standing Diversity Advisory Group that has been charged with bringing awareness to diversity and inclusion issues in the workplace and to providing and/or promoting educational opportunities and best practices on the topic of workplace inclusion.

Recently, state legislation was introduced that would amend the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act to include "sexual orientation and gender identity or expression" as a protected class in the context of the workplace, housing and public accommodations. The Act, which was first established in 1955 and prohibits certain practices of discrimination, currently includes the following protected classes: race, color, religious creed, ancestry, age, sex, national origin, handicap or disability, or use of a guide or support animal because of blindness, deafness or physical handicap.

Currently, there are 22 states, including Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, New York and all the New England states that have statewide nondiscrimination laws covering sexual orientation. Additionally, there are 34 municipalities in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, including the City of Lancaster, that have enacted similar protections.

The Chamber has reviewed this issue both in the context of the above and in accordance with our governance policies and has established the following policy position:

POLICY POSITION:

The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry fully supports workplace inclusion and believes no group of individuals – whether based on race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, age, handicap, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression – should be discriminated against in the workplace.

Further, The Chamber believes all individuals should have equal opportunity to employment, housing and public accommodation regardless of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression.

The Chamber supports amending the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act of 1955 to include these principles.

Approved by the Diversity Advisory Group on 8.25.15.
Approved by the Board of Directors on 10.20.15.