



August 6, 2021

## Organizations Serving LGBTQ Community Call on Charlotte City Council to Strengthen and Pass Nondiscrimination Ordinance

As organizations committed to respect and equality for all people in Charlotte, we urge the Charlotte City Council to pass a strong, comprehensive nondiscrimination ordinance on Monday, August 9.

Our organizations serve members of the LGBTQ community and work to ensure that Charlotte is a place where all people can thrive. But right now, Charlotteans lack critical protections from discrimination, including discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and natural hairstyle. Nine other NC communities have adopted these protections, and as the state's largest city, it is time for us to show leadership on this issue.

We support a comprehensive nondiscrimination ordinance and urge Council to pass these protections on Monday. LGBTQ people cannot wait one more day to be fully protected from discrimination.

While we're appreciative of the current draft, we have concerns about the penalty and enforcement of the ordinance, as well as its scope.

First: **The current draft does not offer a mechanism for levying fines or actual enforcement.** The only direction offered is that a claimant would submit their complaint in writing to the Community Relations Committee, and if the complaint has merit, they will then refer to the City Attorney for disposition, if any. Other cities such as Durham and Asheville have added penalties and enforcement to their ordinances – and Charlotte should do the same. Without these mechanisms, the ordinance will only be a suggestion, no more powerful than a resolution.

Second: **We also urge the ordinance's employment nondiscrimination protections to include all employers in Charlotte** – businesses and organizations with 14 employees or fewer, as is currently in the draft ordinance, *and* companies with 15 or more employees. LGBTQ people and others who work for larger employers should be able to access the protections afforded by our local ordinance and not be forced to rely on the often confusing, bureaucratic process allowed by the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

We urge Council to amend the ordinance to address these two important gaps – ensuring that violations of the nondiscrimination ordinance trigger penalties and that *all* employers



are covered by the ordinance. If these changes are not possible by Monday, we urge Council to pass the ordinance and revise it within 30 days of passage. This will ensure enforceability by the time it takes effect next January.

Charlotte is ready for these nondiscrimination protections – and we deserve the strongest ordinance possible to truly protect residents from discrimination. We call on City Council to strengthen the ordinance. Thank you for taking action.

Signed,

**Bethany Corrigan** (*they/them*), Executive Director, Transcend Charlotte

**Charlotte Small Business Coalition**

**Jenny Jaymes Gunn** (*she/they*), Board member of NOW Charlotte Chapter, LGBT Advisor to CRAN, Charlotte Pride's Trans Pride Coordinator

**Kendra R. Johnson** (*she/her*), Executive Director, Equality NC

**Rell Lowery** (*he/him*), Transgender Relations & Programming, Charlotte Black Pride

**Cameron Pruette** (*he/him*), President, LGBTQ+ Democrats of Mecklenburg County

**Allison Scott** (*she/they*), Director of Impact & Innovation, Campaign for Southern Equality

**Chad Turner** (*he/him*), President/CEO, Carolinas LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce

**Daniel Valdez** (*he/him*), President, Charlotte Pride