



October 17, 2017

The Honorable Joe Negron  
President  
Florida Senate  
409 The Capitol  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

The Honorable Richard Corcoran  
Speaker  
Florida House of Representatives  
420 The Capitol  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

**Re: Florida Businesses Seek Your Support for the Florida Competitive Workforce Act**

Dear President Negron and Speaker Corcoran,

As elected officials whose priorities include job creation and fostering an environment to attract more businesses and economic opportunities in Florida, you will be interested in an effort that has the backing of more than 40 major employers in the state, including 10 Fortune 500 companies (AT&T, CSX, Darden Restaurants, Marriott, NextEra Energy, Office Depot, Raymond James, Tech Data, Walt Disney World Resort and Wells Fargo), as well as more than 450 local businesses.

While it is illegal to discriminate in employment, housing and public accommodations based on race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, national origin, age, handicap or marital status, our statewide nondiscrimination protections are silent about discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. 'Florida Competes' is a coalition that supports passage of the Competitive Workforce Act, which would modernize state law to include anti-discrimination protection based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The coalition believes the Florida Competitive Workforce Act will make the State of Florida more competitive in the national and global marketplace in much the same way anti-discrimination policies have benefited employers. As you know, companies must attract qualified and diverse applicants who reflect the diverse population of the state.

Further, research conducted in 2015 by Republican polling firm The Tarrance Group showed that 68 percent of Florida voters support legislation that would add sexual orientation and gender identity to the state's nondiscrimination law. That's a net 12 percent increase in support compared with similar polling conducted just two years prior.

Twelve counties and 30 municipalities — representing 60 percent of Florida's population — have already passed local ordinances banning discrimination. But that is not good enough. This patchwork system is a hindrance to economic development. In fact, a 2015 Chamber-sponsored study revealed that Florida employers were losing \$362 million annually in productivity and turnover due to discriminatory practices.

Florida should take heed: **A recent AP analysis estimates North Carolina will lose \$3.76 billion over the next 12 years due to the state's limited LGBT protections.**

There are some who believe this legislation, if passed, would open the floodgates to litigation. Nothing could be further from the truth. In Broward County and Palm Beach County, Florida's second and third most populous counties with HRO protections in place, just 2.6 percent and 1.1 percent of complaints filed were related to sexual orientation and gender identity, respectively.

In light of these facts, we respectfully register our disappointment that this good legislation was not heard in the House or Senate during the 2017 legislative session. The silence from both chambers is particularly surprising, given the record number of bi-partisan co-sponsors—70, with 19 Republicans, or 44 percent of all legislators—far surpasses legislation with similar support that was filed and heard in committee last year.

Not only is this measure the right thing to do for Florida, it brings our state in line with 18 other states that have already passed similar comprehensive nondiscrimination protections. **It is time to send the message that all Floridians deserve the same basic civil rights.**

As members of the Florida Competes coalition, we welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue with you at your convenience. A complete list of coalition members and additional information is also available online at [www.FLCompetes.org](http://www.FLCompetes.org).

Now that we have brought this to your attention, we are hopeful the Florida Competitive Workforce Act will receive the consideration it deserves during the 2018 legislative session.

Respectfully,



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John Tonnison  
President, Florida Competes  
Executive Vice President and Chief Information Officer, Tech Data Corporation



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Joe York, President, AT&T Florida, Puerto Rico & USVI



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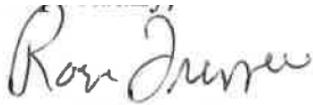
John C. Sumberg  
Managing Partner

Bilzin Sumberg Baena Price & Axelrod LLP



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Gary L. Sasso, President and Chief Executive Officer, Carlton Fields



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Roger C. Frizzell, Chief Communications Officer, Carnival Corporation & plc



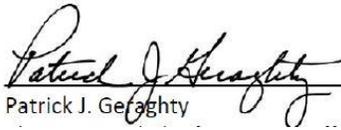
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Marie Chinnici-Everitt  
Managing Director, Chief Marketing Officer & Regional Administrative Manager, DTCC Tampa



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Josh Gold, Executive Vice President, Florida Apartment Association



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Patrick J. Geraghty  
Chief Executive Officer, Florida Blue



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Carol B. Dover, President/CEO, Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association



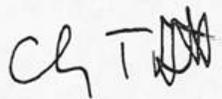
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Julio Fuentes, President and CEO, Florida State Hispanic Chamber of Commerce



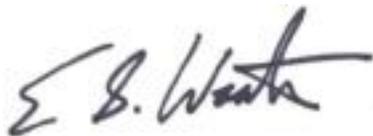
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Wendy E. Kallergis, President & CEO, Greater Miami & The Beaches Hotel Association



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Christopher T. Gassett, SVP/Assistant General Counsel, HSN, Inc.



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Eric S. Woolworth, President, The Miami HEAT / AmericanAirlines Arena



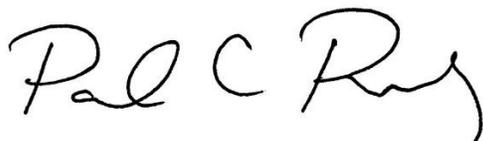
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Kenneth D. Colen, President, On Top of the World Communities, Inc.



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Nick Owens, Owner, POP Yachts



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Paul C. Reilly  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Raymond James



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Chris Steinocher, President & CEO, St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce



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Liliam M. Lopez, President/CEO, South Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce