

Esteemed members of the City Council:

The Commission on Human Rights has tasked itself with reviewing the city code, chapter by chapter, for instances of language that is outdated and loaded with a potential to create bias in the application of law. We expect that you will see few of our suggestions, since our feedback as we progress is being achieved and stored with the law department for inclusion in future changes to the code as other reasons prompt the need to update given chapters. Most of the suggestions also represent issues that are useful but not pressing.

In this process, we also seek to expand protections for classes of people that are not currently described in Chapter 12 (Human Relations). While the current categories are rather comprehensive, they represent conventionally protected classes rather than emerging classes in need of additional protection. Therefore, we are suggesting the addition of the following classes be added to the protections offered Chapter 12:

1. *Receipt of governmental assistance*, that someone may not be denied housing or services because the government is paying for it. For example, if someone is a veteran and their housing is subsidized by the VA, they should not be denied the right to rent a property because of someone's ideological objections to government spending on assistance.
2. *Status as a victim of domestic violence including stalking, sexual assault, harassment, human trafficking and order of protection status*, where a victim of a crime should not be re-victimized by being denied the ability to rent a house or lose a job because they are a victim. This can be seen in an unfortunately too common scenario where women, after being the victim of domestic abuse and obtaining a restraining order, are denied a place to rent by a landlord who doesn't "want any trouble" of the abusive partner showing up and committing an act of violence on the property.
3. *Gender expression*, which is in addition to the already-protected category of gender identity. The latter encapsulates how one expresses feelings, while the former is how one presents oneself, both in relation to conventionally-conceived gender categories. This would protect how one describes their gender in addition to how one displays it.
4. *Legal alienage, citizenship status, and refugee status*, where someone should not be denied service or accommodations for being a legal immigrant to this country. We cannot ask that the same provisions be applied to people in the country without legal documentation, but additional protections in local ordinance will go a long way towards achieving the "Welcoming Cities" vision that the Council has signed on to the past two years.

While members of the Commission did discuss other potential categories, these are ones we were able to reach a consensus on. They represent some degree of expansion of the Commission's charge, though all are in alignment with its mission as well as the vision of a progressive and welcoming city. On behalf of the Commission, I submit these suggestions for additional protected categories for your consideration.

Zach Rubin  
Chair, Commission on Human Rights