



## City of Columbia, Missouri

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### HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016

To: Mayor and Members of City Council

From: Columbia Commission on Human Rights

Subject: Reproductive Non-Discrimination

Dear Mayor and Members of City Council;

Over the last several of our meetings, the Commission on Human Rights has discussed the need to codify the rights of working Columbians based on their reproductive choices. While we would not presume the Council take sides on any ongoing national debate, we wish to offer the suggestion that it can move to protect the many varied choices of women and men through a *Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Ordinance*.

We believe the right to reproductive choices should be made at the discretion of an individual or family, rather than any other party. Several cities have considered adoption of a similar ordinance. Washington, D.C. has led the way in this endeavor, enacting an ordinance in 2014 that said:

*"An employer or employment agency shall not discriminate against an individual with respect to compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment because of or on the basis of the individual's or a dependent's reproductive health decision making, including a decision to use or access a particular drug, device or medical service, because of or on the basis of an employer's personal beliefs about such services"*

The Commission recommends that the city consider adopting such an ordinance. This could greatly improve the lives of otherwise vulnerable populations, all at little or no cost to the city. Women and men should be allowed to choose:

- whether or not to have children,
- whether to be married when deciding to have a child,
- the methods for how those children are conceived,
- whether and which contraceptive devices to use,
- how many children to have,
- to adopt a child (for same-sex and opposite-sex couples),
- or terminate a pregnancy, without fear of retaliation from their employer within the City.

While some of these classes are already somewhat protected - it is illegal per federal law to fire someone for becoming pregnant (per the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978) or having an abortion (per the same act, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) – the rest of the above mentioned groups do not currently constitute protected classes. Reaffirming some of the rights and adding breadth to their promise will affirm our City's commitment to bodily liberty and provide additional means of redress. We can strive to have a Code of Ordinances that strikes a balance between respecting personal beliefs and the need for workplaces free of discrimination.

Sincerely,

Scott Dean, Chair  
City of Columbia Commission on Human Rights