

December 6, 2023

Honorable Mayor Buffalo and Honorable Members of the City Council:

The City of Columbia Commission on Human Rights has been gathering information and hearing from many citizens about the need for an ordinance to protect LGBTQ+ people in our city. We have attached the letters we received about this ordinance to this report.

In line with the Commission's mandate to encourage fair treatment of all persons, including as it relates to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, the Commission voted unanimously on December 5, 2023, to recommend that the city adopt the proposed ordinance to protect LGBTQ+ individuals.

The proposed ordinance that was presented to City Council on November 6, 2023, confirms the human rights that are enshrined in our Code of Ordinances. In particular, in Chapter 12 in Columbia's Code of Ordinances, the city prohibits discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodation based on many protected categories, including "The gender-related identity, appearance, expression, behavior or mannerisms or other gender-related characteristics of an individual, with or without regard to the individual's designated sex at birth" as well as sexual orientation. In addition to being consistent with our local code, this ordinance would also be consistent with international human rights law.

The Commission on Human Rights requests that the City of Columbia adopt the ordinance in a timely fashion.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Amanda Hinnant, Chair, City of Columbia Commission on Human Rights