

To: House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs
From: LGBTQIA Alliance of Vermont
Re: Support for S.40

During the 2016 election the State of Maine considered a ballot initiative (Question 4) that if passed would raise the minimum wage. The initiative passed 55.5% 420,892 votes to 44.5% 337,486 votes

Equality Maine, a statewide LGBTQIA advocacy organization, issued the following statement regarding wages and the LGBT communities:

“The unfortunate reality is that biased attitudes and discrimination limit the economic opportunities available to many LGBT people; as a result, low-wage jobs and limited access to high-paying jobs contribute to disproportionate rates of poverty in our community.

The impact is staggering: recent studies have shown that LGBT couples raising children are twice as likely to live at the poverty line compared to non-LGBT parents, and transgender people are nearly four times as likely to have a household income under \$10,000 per year compared to the population as a whole.

While our work to combat the bias and discrimination that perpetuate these disparities is ongoing, raising the minimum wage would make an immediate and significant difference for members of our community who are struggling.”

The LGBTQIA Alliance of Vermont echoes the statements of Equality Maine and views the passage of S.40 as being the single most direct and effective step which Vermont can take in response to these pay inequities. The LGBTQIA Alliance of Vermont also supports the passage of compliment legislation H. 196 Paid Family Leave and H. 294 Salary History, along with S. 40, as providing the most comprehensive support for VT’s LGBTQIA workers.

The Maine statistics stated were based on a study conducted by the Williams Institute and released in 2013. This study found that:

Members of the **LGBT community have disproportionately high rates of poverty**, so increasing wages would be greatly beneficial both for LGBT people and for the entire state and nation’s economic recovery. Today there are an **estimated 5.4 million LGBT workers in the United States**.

They are:

More likely to live in poverty:

- ❑ **Transgender people are nearly four times as likely to have a household income under \$10,000 per year** as the population as a whole **(15 percent vs. 4 percent)**.
- ❑ **7.6 percent of lesbian couples, compared to 5.7 percent of married heterosexual couples, are in poverty.**
- ❑ **African American same-sex couples have poverty rates more than twice** the rate of heterosexual married African Americans.
- ❑ **14.1 percent of lesbian couples and 7.7 percent of gay male couples receive food stamps**, compared to **6.5 percent of heterosexual married couples**.
- ❑ **Single LGBT adults raising children are three times more likely to have incomes near the poverty line** compared to single non- LGBT individuals raising children.
- ❑ **Married or partnered LGBT individuals raising children are twice as likely to have household incomes near the poverty line** compared to married or partnered non-LGBT parents.

More likely to earn less:

- Studies conducted over the past decade show that **gay and bisexual men experience a wage penalty and earn between 10 percent and 32 percent less** than heterosexual men, even when controlling for important factors like education, occupation, and region of the country.
- **Household income** for households headed by **lesbian couples is considerably lower than it is for both heterosexual households and households headed by gay men.** Two women, even if they individually earn more than comparable heterosexual women, may still have a combined household income that is lower than that of a married heterosexual couple because both earners' wages are affected by the gender wage gap. This "double-gap" multiplier means less money for the entire family every year and fewer resources to save for retirement.

Study site:

<http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGB-Poverty-Update-Jun-2013.pdf>

The LGBTQIA Alliance of Vermont is comprised of representatives from a range of LGBTQIA organizations and individuals from the broader Vermont community. Our mission is to anticipate and collaboratively respond to proposed & enacted laws, policies, actions, and community-level crises that impacts on LGBTQIA Vermonters.

The Alliance provides expert advice to elected officials, political activists, state agencies, community based & professional organizations, and other interested parties on representing and protecting the interests and rights of LGBTQIA Vermonters. The group seeks to fairly represent the collective voice of LGBTQIA Vermonters through advocacy, community building, education, and representation.

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