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ACLU OF IDAHO COMMENT IN RESPONSE TO SENATE PRESIDENT PRO TEM BRENT HILL'S LETTER REGARDING PROGRESS ON AMENDING THE IDAHO HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

BOISE—Today, Senate President Pro Tem Brent Hill sent a letter to members of the media regarding his desire to find “a balanced solution” between non-discrimination protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Idahoans and religious rights. While acknowledging that conversations had taken place in the last year regarding potential amendments to the Idaho Human Rights Act, he also indicated that no legislation will be introduced during the 2019 session.

Kathy Griesmyer, Policy Director with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Idaho had the following response:

“Freedom of religion is one of our most fundamental rights as Americans. That’s why it’s protected in the Idaho and federal constitution, along with additional statutory provisions in Idaho Code. But that freedom does not give any of us the right to harm others. For decades, we have rejected the idea that anyone’s religious beliefs justify discrimination, including on the basis of race, sex and disability. Our longstanding federal and state civil rights laws reflect balance between these interests. Those laws work and will continue to do so for decades to come. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are our friends, neighbors, family, and co-workers. When it comes to being able to earn a living or being served by a business or government office, they should be treated like anyone else and not be discriminated against.”

“For fourteen years the ACLU of Idaho has been fervently advocating for the passage of a straightforward amendment to the Idaho Human Rights Act that would add ‘gender identity’ and ‘sexual orientation’ to the state’s civil rights law. Pro Tem Hill says that legislation will not come forward until a compromise between LGBTQ non-discrimination protections and religious rights are met. But Sen. Maryanne Jordan’s SB 1015 does just that by adding in LGBTQ protections, without permitting religion to be used as a weapon against that same community while also preserving existing religious freedoms under Idaho law. We call on the Pro Tem and other legislative leaders to move that bill forward and allow it to be scheduled for a public hearing. SB 1015 is the solution Idaho has been seeking and it deserves to be heard now.”

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