

**DECLARATION OF RELIGIOUS AND FAITH-BASED SUPPORT FOR
MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE BILL 1722,
AN ACT RELATIVE TO GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AND HATE CRIMES**

DRAFTED BY THE INTERFAITH COALITION FOR TRANSGENDER EQUALITY

AFFIRMING A MORAL VISION

No society is truly just when its members face persecution. Justice requires that a society stand by its moral vision and act against that persecution. The signatories of this letter ask that the Commonwealth act upon its moral vision of a just society by passing House Bill (HB) 1722.

The signatories of this letter are persons of faith, clergy, congregations, and organizations of faith. Some of us are transgender persons. Others are allies and loved ones. Some of us directly serve the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community. Others serve indirectly. *In our support for HB 1722 we speak with one voice. We speak on behalf of those who are vulnerable to violence and persecution because of their gender identities or gender expressions.*

Transgender people and others who do not conform to gender stereotypes face persecution in essential areas of life. HB 1722 adds "gender identity or expression" to the Commonwealth's hate crime laws and non-discrimination laws in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations, public education, and credit. Violence and persecution on the basis of gender identity or expression often stem from the belief that people who do not conform to gender stereotypes are unworthy of protection by the law and are outside of the Commonwealth's moral vision. By passing HB 1722, the legislature would speak out against such persecution.

OUR CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

People of all gender identities and expressions, including transgender people, are born into, enter into, or are called to many faiths. Our faith traditions help to ground and support us in our lifelong quests for fulfillment and responsibility to one another. All of our traditions respect the dignity of each and every human being and recognize our connection to one another.

Because of this connection, the persecution of a person on the basis of gender identity or expression is an injury, not only to an individual, but to everyone connected to that person: to the person's family, friends, and spiritual community. *The oppression of one person indelibly scars all of us. It calls all of us to take account of our moral duties, stand in unity, and take action.*

The Interfaith Coalition for Transgender Equality (ICTE) is a collaborative effort begun in 2007 in support of House Bill 1722 and to support education on transgender issues. For further information, please contact Orly Jacobovits, Keshet, orly@keshetonline.org, (617) 524-9227 or Richard M. Juang, interfaithcoalition@gmail.com. All faiths are welcome. www.interfaithcoalition.org