



SIMMONS

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Honorable Charles Baker
Massachusetts State House
Office of the Governor
Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker:

I write to you in full support of passing H. 1577 and S.735 An Act Relative to Gender Identity and Non-discrimination.

Historically, women's colleges have been places that have supported individuals who have been marginalized because of gender. So, it is fitting that gender non-conforming individuals are welcomed into our community and often find safe haven in communities such as ours. Like many women's colleges, Simmons College has had openly transgender men in our community (individuals, who were born female, but identify as male) for many years. With shifts in traditional notions of gender and increasing numbers of gender non-conforming individuals, we have acknowledged this reality, while we have maintained our historical commitment as a women's college.

Simmons is one of six women's college's in the nation that has opened its doors to transgender women. Our undergraduate admission policy offers transparency and guidance for applicants and communicates to our community and to the world that we strive to be a welcoming place where a range of gender identity and expression exists.

The passage of An Act Relative to Gender Identity in 2011 was a significant first step forward in our state toward protecting people from discrimination based on who they are. The Simmons community applauded the advancement of this law both in principle but also because of what it represented for our own transgender or gender nonconforming students, faculty and staff: safety and protection under the law.

Now, we believe it is necessary to go further to ensure protections by supporting and quickly passing H. 1577 and S.735 An Act Relative to Gender Identity and Non-discrimination. Including "gender identity" in the public accommodations law advances acceptance of the transgender community in the Commonwealth. As an institution, Simmons is deeply committed to ensuring the safety and dignity of all of our community members. These same protections should be in place once they step off our campus grounds. Seventeen states and the District of Columbia offer full protections under the law to

transgender individuals. As a state that takes pride in being welcoming and forward thinking, Massachusetts must be on the right side of history and count ourselves among these progressive states.

I hope we will see passage of this legislation very soon.

Warm Regards,



Helen Drinan, President

cc: Speaker DeLeo
Senator Rosenberg