Published on *Gay-Straight Alliance Network* (http://www.gsanetwork.org)

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Oct. 10, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Governor Brown Signs Bill Strengthening Employment, Housing and Other Nondiscrimination Laws

Sacramento – Governor Jerry Brown signed into law today Assembly Bill 887, the Gender Nondiscrimination Act, which will strengthen employment, housing and other civil rights protections for all Californians, particularly those who face discrimination based on gender identity and expression. The bill was authored by Assemblymember Toni Atkins (D-San Diego) and sponsored by Equality California, Transgender Law Center and Gay-Straight Alliance Network.

“The Gender Nondiscrimination Act protects all Californians. No matter your skin color, your age, where you come from or whether you’re gay, straight, or transgender, we are all protected by the

same rights," said Assemblymember Atkins. "We share equal protection in employment, housing, and education. This bill ensures that no one is left out."

While California anti-discrimination laws already define "gender" to include a person's gender identity and gender expression, the Gender Nondiscrimination Act provides clarity to those who are victims of unlawful discrimination as well as for business owners, employers and other entities required to comply with the anti-discrimination protections by explicitly enumerating gender identity and expression as protected categories in a number of state codes.
"All hardworking people in California, including transgender people, should have an equal opportunity to earn a living and provide for their families," said Roland Palencia, Executive Director for Equality California. "No one should have to live in fear of being fired from a job or denied housing simply because of who they are. The Gender Non-Discrimination Act ensures that the law is clear and folks who experience discrimination know they are protected. We thank Assemblymember Atkins for authoring this important piece of legislation and Governor Brown for signing the bill into law."

In 2009, the Transgender Law Center released its "State of Transgender California" report. The report revealed overwhelmingly that Californians who experience discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression at work or elsewhere often times do not file complaints because they are unaware that they are protected by non-discrimination laws.

"The rights of transgender Californians are coming out of the closet," said Masen Davis, Executive Director of the Transgender Law Center. "Thanks to the fair-minded legislature and Governor Brown, employment posters and student handbooks will finally inform transgender people of their rights, and educate employers and schools about their responsibilities. It's about time."

More than 100 cities across California and hundreds of employers already provide clear non-discrimination protections based on gender identity and gender expression. Cities that list them as separate protected categories in non-discrimination ordinances include Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Cruz, Oakland and West Hollywood.
"All students deserve the opportunity to attend school without fear of discrimination," said Gay-Straight Alliance Network Interim Executive Director Laura Valdez. "We are grateful to Governor Brown for signing this law to ensure that confusing legal wording will no longer stand between California's transgender and gender-nonconforming students and their right to a safe learning environment."

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The Transgender Law Center *is at the heart of a movement of transgender people, their families and allies who recognize that our struggles for equality and authentic self-expression are all connected and related.www.transgenderlawcenter.org*

Gay-Straight Alliance Network (GSA Network) is a national youth leadership organization that empowers youth activists to fight homophobia and transphobia in schools by training student

leaders and supporting student-led Gay-Straight Alliance clubs throughout the country. In California alone, GSA Network has brought GSA clubs to 56% of public high schools, impacting more than 1.1 million students at 850 schools. GSA Network's youth advocates have played a key role in changing laws and policies that impact youth at the local and state level. GSA Network operates the National Association of GSA Networks, which unites more than 30 statewide networks of GSA clubs throughout the country. GSA Network is also the founder of the Make It Better Project, which aims to stop bullying and prevent suicide. www.gsanetwork.org [4]

Equality California (EQCA) is the largest statewide lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights advocacy organization in California. Over the past decade, Equality California has strategically moved California from a state with extremely limited legal protections for LGBT individuals to a state with some of the most comprehensive civil rights protections in the nation. Equality California has passed more than 70 pieces of legislation and continues to advance equality through legislative advocacy, electoral work, public education and community empowerment. www.eqca.org

http://www.gsanetwork.org [4]

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