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Top Florida Companies Call on State Lawmakers to Reject Discrimination, Pass Competitive Workforce Act

-Florida cannot wait another day and risk the chance of becoming the next Indiana-

(TALLAHASSEE, Fla.) – A coalition of some of the state’s top employers and business leaders today sent a letter to Gov. Rick Scott, Senate President Andy Gardiner and House Speaker Steve Crisafulli asking lawmakers to hear House Bill 33 by Rep. Holly Raschein (R-Key Largo) and Senate Bill 156 by Sen. Joe Abruzzo (D-Boynton Beach) and to support the Competitive Workforce Act.

[Florida Businesses for a Competitive Workforce](#) is a coalition of 30 major Florida employers and more than 300 local businesses supporting the Competitive Workforce Act. Among the big brand names on the coalition are eight Fortune 500 companies: Wells Fargo, Disney, Tech Data, NextEra Energy, Marriott, CSX, Office Depot and Darden. The coalition believes that the Florida Competitive Workforce Act will make Florida more competitive in the national and global marketplace in much the same way companies have benefitted from adopting anti-discrimination policies.

The letter is posted online [here](#). A text-only version is provided below.

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Thursday, April 9, 2015

*The Honorable Rick Scott
Governor, State of Florida
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001*

*The Honorable Andy Gardiner
President, Office of the Senate
409, The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100*

*The Honorable Steve Crisafulli
Speaker, House of Representatives
420, The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300*

Dear Elected Leaders of Florida:

We appreciate the efforts made by state officials to create a pro-business environment and second-to-none tourism industry. Florida's climate and beautiful scenery certainly give the state an advantage in many ways. However, the Florida Businesses for a Competitive Workforce coalition strongly urges state lawmakers to reject discrimination and take up legislation that will make the state even more competitive in its ability to attract employers, the talent they need to be successful, and visitors.

The Competitive Workforce Act is bi-partisan legislation that promotes fairness and modernizes state law by banning anti-gay and gender-based discrimination. While it is illegal to discriminate in employment, housing and public accommodations based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap or marital status, state law does not protect individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identification.

Florida Businesses for a Competitive Workforce is a coalition of 30 major Florida employers and more than 300 local businesses supporting the Competitive Workforce Act, proposed in House Bill 33 by Rep. Holly Raschein (R-Key Largo) and Senate Bill 156 by Sen. Joe Abruzzo (D-Boynton Beach). Among the big brand names on the coalition are eight Fortune 500 companies: Wells Fargo, Disney, Tech Data, NextEra Energy, Marriott, CSX, Office Depot and Darden.

In a March 2015 [study](#), several top executives from nationally recognized Florida-based businesses were interviewed, and 75 percent of the participants noted plans to expand in the coming 36 months. Several reported they made relocation or expansion decisions in favor of a location with a public policy climate that promoted diversity and non-discrimination for the LGBT community. The same study reported that discrimination is costing Florida businesses more than \$360 million each year in lost productivity and employee turnover.

Twenty-eight (28) counties and municipalities, representing more than 10 million Floridians, currently have local protections in place for LGBT people, however, 46 percent of the state's population remains vulnerable to discrimination. In addition, the lack of a statewide law in Florida leaves inconsistencies for employers, who must adhere to differing rules and regulations when expanding or relocating.

More than half of our state population is protected by local policies, but we believe it is time to update our state laws to ensure these basic protections exist statewide. Florida cannot wait another day and risk the chance of becoming the next Indiana.



Discrimination has no place in our state, and we strongly encourage lawmakers to hear HB 33/SB 156 and support the Competitive Workforce Act.

The time is now for Florida to roll out the welcome mat to everyone who wants to work, live and play here.

Passing the Competitive Workforce Act is good for business.

It is good for Florida. And it is the right thing to do.

For more information, please visit the coalition's website at www.FLCompetitiveWorkforce.com.

COALITION MEMBERS

