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36 Co-Sponsors Support the Florida Competitive Workforce Act

-Bipartisan support shown to modernize Florida's anti-discrimination law -

(Tallahassee, FL) -- Florida Competes, a coalition of 10 Fortune 500 companies, 30 large corporations and more than 450 small businesses, today announced unprecedented bipartisan support of the Florida Competitive Workforce Act (FCWA), with 36 members of the Florida legislature signing on to [Senate Bill 666](#) by Sen. Jeff Clemens (D-Lake Worth) and [House Bill 623](#) by Reps. Ben Diamond (D-St. Petersburg) and Rene Plasencia (R-Titusville). This marks the highest number of legislators co-sponsoring the FCWA preceding the start of session in the history of the proposed legislation.

The FCWA aims to include sexual orientation and gender identity to the Florida Civil Rights Act of 1992, a move that business leaders say is necessary for continued economic growth in the state. In February, the Jacksonville city council passed a Human Rights Ordinance (HRO) to include such protections; making 60% of Floridians covered by local HROs. The FCWA would establish a uniform statewide law and protect 100% of Floridians from discrimination and streamline the process for addressing workplace discrimination.

The following members of the Florida Legislature have joined the FCWA legislation:

Sen. Lauren Book (D-Plantation)	Rep. Heather Fitzenhagen (R-Ft. Myers)
Sen. Randolph Bracy (D-Ocoee)	Rep. Joseph Geller (D-Dania Beach)
Sen. Gary Farmer (D-Ft. Lauderdale)	Rep. Joe Gruters (R-Sarasota)
Sen. Anitere Flores (R-Miami)	Rep. Bill Hager (R-Boca Raton)
Sen. Rene Garcia (R-Hialeah)	Rep. Kristin Jacobs (D-Coconut Creek)
Sen. Travis Hutson (R-Palm Coast)	Rep. Evan Jenne (D- Hollywood)
Sen. Bobby Powell (D-West Palm Beach)	Rep. Chris Latvala (R- Clearwater)
Sen. Kevin Rader (D-Boca Raton)	Rep. Amy Mercado (D-Orlando)
Sen. José Javier Rodriguez (D-Miami)	Rep. Alex Miller (R-Sarasota)
Sen. Darryl Rouson (D-St. Petersburg)	Rep. Mike Miller (R-Orlando)
Sen. Linda Stewart (D-Orlando)	Rep. Kathleen M. Peters (R-St. Petersburg)
Sen. Victor Torres (D-Orlando)	Rep. Holly Raschein (R-Key Largo)
Sen. Dana Young (R-Tampa)	Rep. Sean Shaw (D-Tampa)
Rep. Bruce Antone (D-Orlando)	Rep. Emily Slosberg (D-Delray Beach)
Rep. Daisy J. Baez (D-Coral Gables)	Rep. Carlos Guillermo Smith (D-Orlando)
Rep. Lori Berman (D-Lantana)	Rep. Richard Stark (D-Weston)
Rep. John Cortes (D-Kissimmee)	Rep. Clovis Watson, Jr. (D- Gainesville)
Rep. Nicholas Duran (D-Miami)	

"I am proud to support this bill with my fellow members in the Senate and House. Such clear bipartisan support is an indication that it is time to modernize the Florida Civil Rights Act of 1992," said **Rep. Nicholas Duran (D-Miami)**. "Florida's laws need to reflect the evolving global marketplace and the international community that choose to visit and live in the state."

"Discrimination of any kind must not be tolerated, which is why I am proud to co-sponsor the Florida Competitive Workforce Act," said **Sen. Bobby Powell (D-West Palm Beach)**. "Our state must be a welcoming place for all who choose to work, live and visit. This is common sense legislation that not only small business owners and major Fortune 500 companies support, but all Floridians who believe that no one should be fired from a job or denied housing and public accommodations based on sexual orientation or gender identity."

Republican Senate and House members had this to say about their support for the much-needed reform.

"Today I would like to reaffirm my full support for the Florida Competitive Workforce Act, a bill that would ban discrimination against LGBT Floridians in employment, housing, and public accommodations," said **Senate President Pro Tempore Anitere Flores (R-Miami)**. "Both counties my district runs through, Miami-Dade and Monroe, have now had these protections for years with positive results. More than half of Floridians live in communities that have these protections and they are better because of them. It is time for the state of Florida to ensure these protections exist statewide."

"I'm proud to join this bi-partisan coalition in support of the Competitive Workforce Act," said **Sen. Rene Garcia (R-Hialeah)**. "There is no place for any type of discrimination on the job or in public housing and accommodations. This bill is simply the right thing to do."

"This legislation will bring Florida in line with 18 other states who have already adopted anti-discrimination practices," said **Sen. Travis Hutson (R-Palm Coast)**. "This is good for business, good for our communities, and it's the right thing to do."

"As we continue to grow and diversify our Florida economy, we need to use every tool in our toolbox to ensure that we attract and retain the best and brightest workforce," said **Sen. Dana Young (R-Tampa)**. "These common sense anti-discrimination measures position Florida to effectively compete on the national and global stage."

"Workplace discrimination is economically damaging to a company, and ultimately to the state. A culture of diversity and inclusion improves productivity and promotes employee retention," said **Rep. Heather Fitzenhagen, (R-Ft. Myers)**. "We need to support Florida's workforce by ensuring everyone enjoys equal opportunity employment."

"The strong bipartisan support of the Florida Competitive Workforce Act shows that the issue is simply good public policy," said **Rep. Joe Gruters (R-Sarasota)**. "It sends a strong message to businesses who are looking to expand in, or relocate to Florida, that their employees will be afforded the same basic rights."

"It is time for Florida legislators to unite and support the Florida Competitive Workforce Act," said **Rep. Bill Hager (R-Boca Raton)**. "We don't want to risk falling behind economically to the 18 states that already have similar anti-discrimination laws."

“When we study best practices in business, we look to companies that are innovative, prosperous and attract the best-trained workforce,” said **Rep. Chris Latvala (R-Clearwater)**. “That’s why so many of the biggest job creators in the state have established nondiscrimination policies at their companies and support this bill. The Florida Competitive Workforce Act is pro-business.”

“Both small and large businesses agree that statewide uniform protections are beneficial to the economic development of Florida,” said **Rep. Mike Miller (R-Orlando)**. “Residents across the state should receive equal opportunity employment.”

“Strong businesses lead to strong communities,” said **Rep. Kathleen M. Peters (R-St. Petersburg)**. “The economic strength of our state is dependent upon the equal rights of all our residents and visitors.”

“Florida is known for its diverse population and as a top destination for visitors,” said **Rep. Holly Raschein (R-Key Largo)**. “It’s important to signal to both residents and tourists alike that our state values the civil rights of all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.”

“I applaud and thank the Senators and Representatives who have joined the bill as co-sponsors. The member companies of our business coalition recognize that prospective employees and a diverse employee population are looking to live in vibrant and welcoming communities. A nondiscrimination law that includes workplace, housing and public accommodation protections is needed to create a climate of safety and respect for the families of our employees throughout their home state. Legislative progress in this area would telegraph that Florida is open, and open for business,” said **John Tonnison, Executive Vice President and CIO of the Tech Data Corporation, and President of Florida Competes**.

Top employers in the state have united to form Florida Competes, which aims to grow Florida’s economy by attracting and retaining the best workers to the state with the promise of equal opportunity employment. Major Florida employers, including 10 Fortune 500 companies AT&T, CSX, Darden Restaurants, Marriott, NextEra Energy, Office Depot, Raymond James, Tech Data, Walt Disney World Resort and Wells Fargo have joined, with more than 450 local businesses on board.

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About Florida Competes

Florida Competes, formerly known as the Florida Businesses for a Competitive Workforce coalition, is a 501c(4) whose mission is to support passing the Competitive Workforce Act, which would modernize state law to include anti-discrimination protection based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The coalition believes that the Competitive Workforce Act will make Florida more competitive in the national and global marketplace in much the same way companies have benefited from adopting anti-discrimination policies. For additional information, please go to www.FLCompetes.org or visit the coalition on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).