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October 2, 2017

The Honorable Tim Kaine
United States Senate
231 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Kaine:

On behalf of the more than 1.2 million members of the National Association of REALTORS®, thank you for introducing S. 1328, “The Fair and Equal Housing Act of 2017,” which will protect Americans from housing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The real estate industry strongly supports equal housing opportunity. The National Association of REALTORS® updated our Code of Ethics in 2009 and 2013 to prohibit REALTORS® from discriminating based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and the Association strongly supports your legislation.

A person’s sexual orientation and gender identity has no bearing on their ability to fulfill their obligations when purchasing a home or renting an apartment. Support for LGBT equality in housing is widespread. According to a 2016 study by Better Homes and Garden Real Estate, 65 percent of millennials and 55 percent of millennials living in rural areas support LGBT equality. Nationally, 22 states offer some form of fair housing protection based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This patchwork of laws can inhibit sales and purchases by families moving across state lines.

Despite progress, discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity still exists. A 2007 study in Michigan revealed discrimination based on sexual orientation in 25 percent of rental tests and 25 percent of mortgage finance tests. A 2016 study in northeast Ohio showed a 30 – 35 percent rate of discrimination in rentals based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

This bill is a straightforward addition to Fair Housing laws that continues bipartisan cooperation in protecting Americans from housing discrimination. In addition, mechanisms for enforcing the Fair Housing Act will not change with this bill.

NAR looks forward to working with you to advance S. 1328, “The Fair Housing and Equal Housing Act of 2017.”

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'William E. Brown'.

William E. Brown
2017 President, National Association of REALTORS®



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