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December 6, 2017

Policy Statement- Opposing Municipal Ballot Proposition 1

The Anchorage Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) has been a leader in economic development and business assistance for 31 years. Our 260 investor companies represent the largest employers in Alaska, and a mix of locally grown and national corporations across every major industry in the state. Our primary mission is to grow and diversify in the economy, and as a fundamental component of that mission, the AEDC Board of Directors adopted as its strategic vision making Anchorage the #1 city to live, work and play in America.

The Live. Work. Play. initiative is a business-led effort to improve the quality of life in Anchorage, making the city not only a better place to live, but a better climate for business investment. In 2015, the Anchorage Assembly passed an ordinance making it illegal to discriminate based on sexual orientation in areas of housing, employment and public accommodations, an ordinance that AEDC strongly supported. In April, voters will be asked to decide on a ballot initiative, Proposition 1, which would remove the anti-discrimination protections of this ordinance for transgender individuals with respect to usage of public bathrooms and locker room facilities.

The AEDC Board of Directors has voted to oppose this initiative. It is directly contradictory to our values as a community and as businesses to foster and protect diversity and inclusion in Anchorage. AEDC believes this initiative would inflict unnecessary discrimination on members of the community, and that it solves no evident problem that has been created by the original passage of the anti-discrimination ordinance. Moreover, this ordinance would have significant negative economic impacts on our city, the largest economy in the state.

In 2016, the legislature of the state of North Carolina passed HB2, a statewide ordinance with the same intent as Proposition 1 in Anchorage. An analysis by the Associated Press estimates that North Carolina, statewide, will lose over \$3.75 billion in investment because of the passage of



HB2. That lost income comes in the form of companies such as PayPal, Deutsche Bank, and Adidas choosing not to locate major corporate headquarters in the state, canceled concerts and conventions, and a boycott from the NCAA on any future national sporting events so long as the law is on the books.

Today, 17 of Alaska's 25 largest employers have adopted workplace policies that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, and there is a growing trend here, and nationwide, to prohibit gender identity discrimination as well. These employers, many of them AEDC investors and board members, recognize that non-discrimination policies increase the available pool of talented job applicants, and they also open new opportunities for innovation, government contracting, and growth. We support protections for Anchorage's LGBT community and believe that all Anchorage residents should be treated equally, from the workplace to the locker room.

Anchorage is already facing economic challenges; we do not need to add national boycotts and reductions in visitors to our state to the list of headwinds. We need to be doing what we can to attract new businesses to our community, not scare them away with discriminatory legislation that does not represent who we are: a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming city for all people, regardless of race, nationality, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Tourism is one of the largest, and fastest growing, sectors of our economy. To pass Proposition 1 would handicap this industry, which relies on our national and international reputation as a welcoming city to attract visitors. The ramifications of damaging our reputation in this regard would be long-lasting, and we would not rebound quickly even if the initiative was eventually repealed.

Discrimination is not a part of Anchorage's community spirit, and it is not how we do business. AEDC strongly opposes passage of Proposition 1, and we encourage those with questions on this issue to research the economic impacts of HB2 in North Carolina, as well as similar measures in other states and municipalities. Our economy depends on having a diverse workforce, attractive quality of life, and positive reputation as a city that treats everyone with dignity and respect.

The Board of Directors of the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation opposes passage of Proposition 1 on the April 3rd ballot and urges voters to vote "No" on this unnecessary and divisive legislation.

Sincerely,

Bill Popp
President and CEO

Marilyn Romano
Chair, AEDC Board of Directors