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## **Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund Hails Governor Paterson's Signing Tomorrow of Executive Order Barring Discrimination Against Transgender State Employees**

### **New York State To Become Seventh State to Offer Job Protections to Transgender Public Employees**

NEW YORK, NEW YORK - The Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund (TLDEF) hails New York State Gov. David A. Paterson's planned signing tomorrow of an executive order barring discrimination against transgender state employees. New York will become the seventh state to protect public employees from discrimination based on gender identity or expression, after Delaware, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

"Like everyone else, transgender employees deserve to be judged on their ability to do the job, and not on who they are," TLDEF executive director Michael Silverman said. "This executive order will ensure that hard-working transgender employees of New York State can work without fear of discrimination, and provide for themselves and their families," he added. "We applaud Governor Paterson for taking this important step for transgender equal rights."

Transgender people face tremendous discrimination in the workplace. Forty-seven percent of transgender people report being fired, or denied a job or promotion just because of who they are. In one recent Florida case, 17-year-old Zikerra Bellamy was denied a job at a McDonald's restaurant because she is transgender. Miss Bellamy applied online for the job, but after managers learned that she is transgender, she received a voicemail message from one of the them telling her, "You will not get hired. We do not hire fa\*\*ots." TLDEF filed a complaint on Miss Bellamy's behalf on Dec. 7.

Few protections exist for transgender people who experience employment discrimination. In 38 states, there is no law protecting people from being fired because they are transgender. In New York, while a number of municipalities protect transgender workers from on-the-job discrimination, there is no statewide law offering such protection. The Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act, which would add gender identity and expression to the state's non-discrimination law, has been repeatedly introduced and passed by the state Assembly, but it has never been passed by the state Senate.

Federal law similarly offers no job protection for transgender people. The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) would address discrimination in the workplace by making it illegal to fire, refuse to hire, or refuse

to promote an employee based on the person's gender identity or sexual orientation. ENDA has been stalled in the House of Representatives despite demands by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans that Congress take swift action to pass the legislation.

"We applaud Gov. Paterson for recognizing that transgender New Yorkers should have the chance to earn a living and provide for their families without being refused a job or fired for reasons that have nothing to do with their ability to do the job," Silverman added.

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Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund is committed to ending discrimination based upon gender identity and expression, and to achieving equality for transgender people through public education, test-case litigation, direct legal services, community organizing and public policy efforts.