



January 9, 2016

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee Member:

On behalf of more than one million transgender Americans, the National Center for Transgender Equality writes to express our strong opposition to the nomination of Senator Jeff Sessions for Attorney General. The position of Attorney General is one of central importance to the protection of fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, and the rush to confirm such a divisive and extreme nominee on an incomplete record is deeply disturbing.

The mission of the Department of Justice (DOJ) is to ensure fair and impartial administration of justice for all Americans, including people of all races, nationalities, and religions, women, people with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans. The Department's many responsibilities have an especially profound impact on the lives of vulnerable communities such as transgender Americans. In a national survey of transgender adults, one in six (16%) who had been employed in the last year reported losing a job because they were transgender. More than three-quarters (77%) of those who were out or perceived as transgender as K-12 students reported some form of discrimination, and a stunning 17% reported the mistreatment was so bad that they changed schools or dropped out. Most disturbingly, nearly one in ten transgender Americans (9%) reported being the victim of a hate-motivated physical attack in the last year. In sum, transgender Americans face persistent discrimination and violence in their daily lives and, like other Americans, rely on the Justice Department to play a key role in protecting their basic rights and freedoms.

Unfortunately, Sen. Sessions has shown through his record, statements, associations, and temperament, as to whether he is prepared to fully and fairly carry out this critical role in our government. This alarming record is exemplified by, but certainly not limited to, the disturbing past statements and prosecutorial decisions that previously led the Senate to reject Sessions for a federal judgeship, as well as the outrageous statement just weeks ago that grabbing a women's genitals without consent is not sexual assault. We are also deeply concerned by Senator Sessions' long and continuing courting and elevating nativist and white supremacist organizations and advocates, including his close relationship with and praise of the so-called "platform of the alt-right," Breitbart Media. Sessions has steadfastly refused to criticize even the ugliest and most openly racist rhetoric of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim extremists he has associated with—even while he has never hesitated to lambast judicial nominees with any past associations with civil rights groups. This apparent double standard, along with numerous other concerns that have been raised about Session's record, underscores the need for a careful and thorough vetting of this nominee.

Sessions has also been a vocal opponent of equality for LGBT Americans for decades. As Alabama Attorney General, Sessions worked to stop an LGBT student group from holding a conference at the University of Alabama. Sessions said he would "do everything I can to stop that conference" because of what he called LGBT people's "sexually deviate activities"—an effort a federal court ruled unconstitutional. In the Senate, Sessions has consistently opposed even the most basic legal protections

for LGBT Americans, including the 2009 Hate Crimes Prevention Act and protections for LGBT survivors to access victims' services under the Violence Against Women Act—both of which he would be responsible for enforcing as Attorney General.

The work of the Attorney General will have a profound impact on the lives, fundamental freedoms, and dignity of millions of Americans. The Attorney General is charged ensuring equal justice for all and safeguarding civil rights. Because of his long history of extremism, intolerance, and disturbing remarks and associations, Senator Sessions has disqualified himself from this position. We strongly urge the Committee to reject him, as it did in 1986.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mara Keisling', followed by a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line that extends to the right.

Mara Keisling
Executive Director