



## **OREGON SENATE DEMOCRATS**

Salem, Oregon  
Oregon State Legislature

### **PRESS RELEASE**

April 14, 2021

CONTACT: Amanda Kraus, 503-986-1074

Amanda.Kraus@oregonlegislature.gov

### **Senate Democrats Pass Bill to Ensure Justice for LGBTQ+ Victims of Crime**

SALEM – Today the Oregon Senate Democrats passed Senate Bill 704, which will provide clarity and justice in crimes committed against LGBTQ+ Oregonians. Senate Bill 704 passed with near-unanimous support.

Under current law, it is an affirmative defense to commit an act of murder in the second degree or claim self-defense because the act was committed due to an “extreme emotional disturbance” caused by the victim’s gender, gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. This affirmative defense is colloquially known as the “gay panic defense” or the “trans panic defense.” Senate Bill 704 bans the use of this affirmative defense.

“The fact that this defense is available in state law is a relic of hate against LGBTQ+ individuals. No one should be able to use a person’s identity to justify or excuse acts of violence against them. Legal protection for bigotry is absolutely unacceptable and repealing this antiquated and hateful law is long overdue,” said Senator Kate Lieber (D-Beaverton), who spoke in support of the bill. “As only the second LGBTQIA+ and first openly gay member of the Oregon Senate, I feel very strongly about ensuring that Oregon is a safe place for my community. In addition, as an attorney and former prosecutor, I know well the need for clear, statutory language when it comes to protecting communities who are risk of discrimination and violence,” Senator Lieber added.

When Senate Bill 704 passes the House of Representatives and is signed into law, Oregon will be the [thirteenth state](#) to ban the LGBTQ+ panic defense.

“We have seen a rise in hate and bias crimes in Oregon, and we know 2020 was the deadliest year for transgender individuals nationwide. This necessary legal change to remove an outdated, so-called ‘legal strategy grounded in hate,’ said Senate Majority Leader Rob Wagner (D-Lake Oswego), who introduced SB 704. “This is a step in the right direction toward justice for LGBTQ+ Oregonians.”

Senate Bill 704 now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.

###