



March 4, 2010

Stacie Truesdell Michaels, Chair
Nevada Taxicab Authority
1785 E. Sahara Avenue, Suite 200
Las Vegas, NV 89104

Dear Ms. Michaels,

We are writing to express grave concern about recent reports of a Nevada Taxicab Authority policy currently in circulation that classifies homosexual individuals as a "high-risk group" for communicable disease along with intravenous-drug users and prostitutes. Although we understand and appreciate that your board voted to change such discriminatory language in 2007, it is highly problematic that such policies remain as published expressions of the Taxicab Authority's position.

As a government agency tasked with the regulation and management of an important service provided in our state, the Taxicab Authority bears the responsibility of ensuring that individuals do not suffer discrimination based on inaccurate stereotypes. That such a policy would continue to be printed and promoted among employees under your charge is unacceptable and must cease immediately.

Nevada has a long and proud tradition of welcoming visitors and encouraging them to take part in a society that honors individual freedoms. In 2009 our State Legislature enacted SB207, a bill that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation in places of public accommodation, because we are a state that identifies as, and depends upon, being a welcoming and open environment. It is all the more troubling, therefore, that the Taxicab Authority would allow such a policy to remain on the books long after it was amended. Misinformation about the risks associated with patrons of a certain sexual orientation could lead to speculative denials of service or other situations involving serious violations of our nondiscrimination statutes.

The ACLU of Nevada requests that the Taxicab Authority, in addition to removing the aforementioned language and confirming this action publicly, also proactively educate its employees about the fallacy inherent in the policy's old language and the need to treat all patrons equally. While we are sure that your agency is operating in good faith on both of these fronts, such steps are necessary to rectify this situation, which has deeply affected both residents and visitors in Nevada.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maggie McLetchie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Maggie McLetchie
Staff Attorney & Interim Southern Program Director

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