



**VIRGINIA CONFERENCE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS**

March 8, 2010

The Honorable Robert F. McDonnell
Governor of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor McDonnell:

On behalf of the Virginia Conference of the American Association of University Professors, I write to express our deep concern that Virginia's public colleges and universities have been advised by the Attorney General to "take appropriate actions" to remove sexual orientation from campus non-discrimination policies.

Discrimination on grounds irrelevant to qualifications and merit is abhorrent to the values of higher education and to the Commonwealth of Virginia. As a matter of justice, we demand that colleges and universities be permitted to design non-discrimination policies that are broadly inclusive and defend the rights of all to work in an environment free of invidious discriminatory practices.

Further, we are concerned about the ability of Virginia's system of higher education to remain competitive in attracting and retaining the best faculty and staff. With salaries frozen and deep cutbacks in state support, Virginia may already be ceding ground to others as it struggles to retain the high quality of our higher education. The Attorney General's advisory letter further threatens our ability to make Virginia's public institutions attractive places to work. Please know that this concern is widely held by faculty, regardless of sexual orientation. We find that permissible discrimination against some undermines the equality of status essential to the free exchange of ideas on campus.

Therefore, we call upon you to write the House of Delegates or the Senate requesting the immediate introduction of either or both of the following:

- 1) a bill to amend the nondiscrimination policy in Section 2.2-3900 B.1. of the Virginia Human Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity (such legislation would moot the Attorney General's advice to the colleges); and
- 2) a bill identical to SB 66 governing nondiscrimination in the state workforce or HB 1116 governing nondiscrimination in state and local employment (such legislation would implement the nondiscrimination policy for public employees, including those in your office and at state universities and colleges).

Thank you in advance for your attention.

Sincerely,

Patricia W. Cummins

Patricia W. Cummins, President
Virginia Conference of the AAUP