

Iowa Erases ‘Gender Identity’ from Its Civil Rights Law: Employers Still Obligated Under Federal Title VII

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- [Senate File 418](#)

The Iowa Legislature passed a bill ([Senate File 418](#)) removing “gender identity” as a protected characteristic under the Iowa Civil Rights Act. The Act prohibits discrimination in employment, education, housing, credit, and public accommodations. Governor Kim Reynolds signed the bill on Feb. 28, 2025, and the new law is effective July 1, 2025.

Although Iowa is ending state civil rights protections based on gender identity, employers should be mindful that gender identity remains a protected characteristic under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The bill expressly defines “male” and “female” and states that “sex should not be considered a synonym for gender identity.” Rather, the definitions of “male” and “female” are based on the sex assigned at birth. For purposes of state law, sex-based distinctions in line with these definitions are permitted in restrooms and locker rooms, among other places.

Iowa employers with at least 15 employees are covered by Title VII, which prohibits discrimination in employment. Gender identity remains a protected characteristic under Title VII, as interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Bostock v. Clayton County*. Some municipalities in Iowa also prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity.

Iowa employers should consult with counsel regarding necessary updates to policies and practices to ensure they align with federal, state, and municipal laws related to gender identity.

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