



**Commissioner Brad Avakian**  
Bureau of Labor & Industries

**Press Release**

For Immediate Release

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## **Avakian files formal charges against P Club for discrimination**

*Charges represent first commissioner's complaint filed under landmark 2007 civil rights law*

**PORTLAND**—Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian has filed formal charges of unlawful discrimination against Portland's Twilight Room Annex, formerly known as the P Club.

Civil Rights Division investigators with the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) previously found substantial evidence of discrimination against transgender patrons of the North Portland bar. Despite the investigation's findings, parties failed to reach a settlement.

**"No Oregonian should face discrimination where they live, work or play,"** said Commissioner Avakian. **"Our Administrative Prosecution Unit is working to ensure that the civil rights of all Oregonians are protected from unlawful discrimination."**

After a [formal commissioner's complaint was launched](#), BOLI investigators found evidence confirming that bar owner Chris Penner left phone messages asking a group of transgender patrons to stop visiting the establishment because he didn't want the P Club known as a "tranny bar".

During interviews with P Club employees and patrons, investigators also found no evidence to support Penner's contention that the group, known as the Rose City T-Girls, disrupted business. Further, the agency's letter of determination concludes that Penner failed to notify the group of any complaints about their behavior, instead blocking the entire group from the bar.

The charges are the first commissioner's complaint filed under the landmark 2007 Oregon Equality Act, a law to protect the rights of gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgender Oregonians in employment, housing and public places. As a legislator, Avakian championed the legislation and carried it on the Senate floor.

**"Business owners cannot discriminate against patrons based on gender identity,"** said Avakian. **"Our agency will use its full spectrum of tools to make sure that businesses follow the law, including filing commissioner's complaints when there may be barriers to individuals filing themselves."**

Oregon law authorizes the Labor Commissioner to file a complaint on behalf of the state when he has reason to believe that violations of civil rights law are occurring in a place of public accommodation. A commissioner's complaint does not limit or preclude private legal action by current or former employees.

BOLI protects all Oregonians from unlawful discrimination, investigating allegations of civil rights violations in workplaces, career schools, housing and public accommodations, and enforces compliance with state laws relating to wages, hours, and terms and conditions of employment. The labor commissioner can issue cease and desist orders, award both economic and non-economic damages and assess civil penalties for violations of civil rights law.

For more information about BOLI's efforts to protect workplaces and the civil rights of all Oregonians, visit <http://www.oregon.gov/BOLI>.

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