New Additions to Michigan's Hate Crime Bill

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More groups were added to Michigan's hate crimes legislation this week.

"I think when your personally attacking someone for who they are I think it's worse," said Michelle Nickerson of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-gender (LGBT) Resource Center at Michigan State University (MSU). "You're hurting them for something they cannot change."

Thursday the Michigan House of Representatives voted to add sexual identity or expression to the list of recognized hate crimes.

Rep. Barb Byrum of Onondaga said, "This merely opens an avenue, opens that door for law enforcement to hold these people accountable."

"By making it an actual crime in and of itself it'll make people realize how much of, how big a deal it actually is," said Bridget Kelley of the LGBT Resource Center at MSU.

Legislation like this has been tried before.

In fact Michigan Equality, an organization that lobby's on behalf of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-gender community has been pushing this issue for more than a year.

President Doug Meeks points out that the amendment would also help people with disabilities.

Meeks said, "It's not just the LGBT community that benefits from this."

Currently things like race, gender and religion are covered by the Ethnic Intimidation Act and some argue that that is good enough,

others say it's past time for Michigan to broaden the list.

Nickerson said, "I think it's important that crimes victimizing LGBT people are recognized as hate crimes.

Even though this legislation has passed the House it still needs to get by the Senate and the governor's pen.