

PVD

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



Hon. Joseph M. McNamara, Chair, House Committee on Education  
et al. Sitting Committee Members, Rhode Island General Assembly

Amnesty International USA Local Group 1016  
ITEM: H7727, H7781, H7873  
POSITION: OPPOSE

To The Esteemed Chair and Members of the House Committee on Education:

Thank you for inviting testimony on House Bills H7727, H7781, and, at a previous public hearing, H7873, which together seek to normalize bigoted language against protected categories of people in our state under the guise of public policy. Amnesty International USA local group 1016 opposes these bills, and any other gross attempts to taint civic discourse and procedure, in the strongest possible language.

Other than being examples of barely-veiled hate speech, these bills are just bad policy. In every case, they each rest on premises not grounded in reality. For instance, the bill the committee heard from Rep. Roberts a few weeks ago, H7873, seems to rest on the premise that professional, licensed, accredited teachers are putting sexual content in elementary school lesson plans. While that may be a fear that some parents might have, it is not founded on any objective facts from our state. It simply does not happen that any lesson plans in our state contain prurient, sexual content. Even if that were to ever be the case, there are plenty of existing criminal statutes in our General Laws that would protect Rhode Island families from that kind of behavior. As for the other bills, both H7727 and 7781 seem to rest on unsupportable premises—not the least of which being that somehow trans women and girls are not women, or that trans men and boys are not men. That is not a medical or psychological health opinion, that is an opinion informed at best by religious convictions. The “Sports” bill is particularly incoherent in that it attempts to state that the presence of higher levels of testosterone in a person’s body is a marker of male “gender” but not when that testosterone is present in the body of someone who has taken medically necessary steps to get to the level of testosterone that helps them

present as male and feel more comfortable in the body they happened to be born with. This is like saying the only true Rhode Islanders were born here, and anyone else who moved to RI doesn't get any of the same protections under the law, no matter how many Dells they have in the summer, or how many "R's" they drop: we do not legislate like that here, because that would be a ridiculous premise to grant.

There simply exists no valid premises for any of these policies. That, and the fact that these policies match "model" policy from other states being promulgated by extremist religious ideologues, lead us to believe that these are meant to be propaganda, literally a waste of the committee's time and resources to entertain.

Every private citizen is allowed to have bigoted opinions and express them; like any other speech, the state must not restrict or proscribe that except to prevent incitement to violence. Every person with bigoted opinions is allowed to identify and associate with other like-minded people; this, too, is a First Amendment issue. Furthermore, any association of people can petition their representatives to legislate based on those bigoted opinions. Their representatives might even hold the same bigoted opinions; all protected by the First Amendment. Amnesty PVD understands that the state's branches of government, state agencies or officials, must not restrict these activities, either in law or by enforcement. However, our communities cannot and will not be silent while a small group of extremely vocal bigots attempt to misappropriate our public fora in order to spread political propaganda and normalize language that dehumanizes and disenfranchises GLBTQ people in our state. It is truly unacceptable to see our public square being used against the human rights of a group of residents.

**Amnesty PVD strongly urges the committee to hold these bills indefinitely pending withdrawal by their sponsors.**