



April 10, 2024

The Honorable Joseph McNamara
House Education Committee

To Chair McNamara and members of the committee,
My name is Jaye Watts, I am a clinical social worker and the director of the Trans Health Program at Thundermist Health Center. I am here in opposition to H7727.

Thundermist is a Federally Qualified Community Health Center with locations in Woonsocket, West Warwick, and South County. Thundermist serves over 62,000 people, that's 1 in 18 Rhode Islanders, with patients who come from every zip code in our state. In 2015, Thundermist became the first in Rhode Island to establish a dedicated program for Trans Health that presently serves over 2,000 people.

I am here for Thundermist today to fulfill our mission to improve the health of our patients and communities by delivering exceptional health care, removing barriers to that care, and advancing healthy lifestyles.

Youth sports can play a significant role in a young person's development. Student athletes learn skills in teamwork, discipline, self-confidence and leadership. Things that all young people deserve to experience.

It is important to note that this bill is part of a larger package of anti-LGBTQ legislation that we have seen introduced in the statehouse this year. These bills are not about Rhode Islanders or Rhode Island problems, they are about the national extremist groups seeking to limit the rights of LGBTQ+ people across the country. It is seeking to create a harmful "solution" to a problem that does not exist.

The Rhode Island Interscholastic League has had a fair and practical policy for the participation of transgender students for 10 years. Giving guidelines for the school and family to make a careful decision on which teams a student athlete will be eligible for. That policy emphasizing that "participation in...

WOONSOCKET

Medical

450 Clinton St.
Woonsocket, RI 02895

Phone: 401-767-4100

Fax: 401-235-6896

Dental & WIC

25 John A. Cummings Way
Woonsocket, RI 02895

Dental Phone: 401-767-4161

Dental Fax: 401-767-5441

WIC Phone: 401-767-4109

WIC Fax: 401-235-6883

WEST WARWICK

Medical

186 Providence St.
West Warwick, RI 02893

Phone: 401-615-2800

Fax: 401-615-2805

Dental

5 Washington St.
West Warwick, RI 02893

Phone: 401-615-2804

Fax: 401-352-6248

SOUTH COUNTY

Medical & Dental

1 River St.
Wakefield, RI 02879

Phone: 401-783-0523

Fax: 401-783-9448

Dental Phone: 401-783-5646

Dental Fax: 401-284-2081

Pediatrics

360 Kingstown Rd.
Suite 101

Narragansett, RI 02882

Phone: 401-789-6492

Fax: 401-783-9448



athletics is not just allowed but encouraged.” At no time, in the past 10 years have I heard of there being an issue with this policy.

Because there isn't an issue and this isn't about transgender students dominating high school sports. It is about a strange new political agenda targeting the transgender community.

Rhode Island has a reputation of being a safe and inclusive state that protects and affirms the dignity and rights of all, including LGBTQ+Rhode Islanders is widely known. This makes us both a beacon for those seeking safety and a target for those seeking to tear that safety away.

I urge you to be the beacon and swiftly reject this bill.
Thank you,

Jaye Watts, LICSW