

## Lisa Cataldi

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**From:** Steve Ahlquist <atomicsteve@gmail.com>  
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**To:** House Education Committee  
**Subject:** Testimony against H7727 and H7781

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### [H7727](#) and [H7781](#)

House and Senate Republicans have filed a batch of bills in the **Rhode Island General Assembly** that seek to limit the rights of LGBTQ+ people, with a specific animus towards transgender, gender diverse, and transitioning youth. Some of these bills will not be heard in committee, but three of them will be heard in House Committees this upcoming [Tuesday](#) and [Wednesday](#).

As the **Rhode Island General Assembly** is presently constituted, none of these bills will pass out of committee. and none of them will make it to the floor of the Senate or the House. The Senate or the House will approve none of them, and the Governor will never be presented with an opportunity to sign or veto these bills.

Given this, what could be the motivation behind filing such legislation? Is it simply [vice signaling](#), that is, "...a public display of immorality, intended to create a community based on cruelty and disregard for others..."

We know that anti-LGBTQ policies impact the mental health of youth. In 2023, **The Trevor Project**, a leading suicide prevention organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth, released a [new poll that found](#) "an overwhelming majority of LGBTQ youth have been negatively impacted by recent debates and laws around anti-LGBTQ policies and that many have also experienced victimization as a result."

#### **Key findings of the study include:**

- 86% of transgender and nonbinary youth say recent debates about state laws restricting the rights of transgender people have negatively impacted their mental health. A majority of those trans youth (55%) said it impacted their mental health "very negatively."
- 71% of LGBTQ youth - including 86% of trans and nonbinary youth - say state laws restricting the rights of LGBTQ young people have negatively impacted their mental health.
- 75% of LGBTQ youth - including 82% of transgender and nonbinary youth — say that threats of violence against LGBTQ spaces, such as community centers, pride events, drag shows, or hospitals/clinics that serve transgender people, often give them stress or anxiety. Nearly half (48%) of those LGBTQ youth reported it gives them stress or anxiety "very often."

It is past time that we understand the truth: Damaging the mental health of vulnerable transgender, gender diverse, and transitioning people is not an unintended side effect of introducing such bills, but the point. It's not a bug, it's a feature. The anti-trans "movement" is not a benign pushback against a woke left agenda - its intent is genocidal.

I've been at various regional school committee meetings all over Rhode Island where the **Transgender, Gender-Diverse, and Transitioning Student Policy** has been under review and sometimes under attack. I have heard the words of anti-trans activists who are not trying to hide their intentions. They want transgender people to disappear from public life and it starts, like genocides often do, by denying the existence of transgender people.

- Anti-trans activist **Lauri Gaddis Barrett** [publicly stated](#) that transgender, gender-diverse, and transitioning students are “confused” about their gender.
- “No matter how much a boy wants to be a girl, dresses like a girl or looks like a girl, he isn't a girl and he will never be a girl,” [said Westerly resident](#) Robert Chiaradio. Chiaradio has testified in Westerly and throughout the state against policies that protect transgender, gender-diverse, and transitioning students.
- “I just am female. I don't have a gender,” [said conservative anti-trans activist](#) Nicole Solas. “I don't subscribe to gender ideology. I have a right not to subscribe to an ideology just like other people have a right not to believe in my religion.”

Some [have critiqued the term](#) “transgender genocide” as inappropriate for modern Western contexts, arguing that current levels of discrimination and violence fail to reach the legal definition of genocide.

The term “genocide” is extreme and genocides can sometimes be difficult to disambiguate from ordinary bigotry, especially in the early years. But already, families with the means to do so [are fleeing states](#) where anti-trans bills, like those being introduced this year in the General Assembly, have become law.

At the **Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC)**, held in February, **Michael Knowles**, a right-wing political commentator, [said](#), “For the good of society ... transgenderism must be eradicated from public life entirely.” At that conference everyone, from once and possibly future President **Donald Trump** to **Marjorie Taylor Greene** down to low-ranking right-wing extremist commentators, called for laws that would harass and persecute transgender, gender-diverse, and transitioning people.

One thing that separates a more casual description of genocidal intent, like that expressed at CPAC are laws, are legal actions taken by governments, like those passed in Texas and other states.

Here in Rhode Island, we led the country when we became the second state to legally protect transgender, gender-diverse, and transitioning people.

Nine months ago [I interviewed](#) House Speaker **Joseph Shekarchi** about this.

**Steve Ahlquist:** The anti-trans legislation from Representative **Patricia Morgan** never got heard in committee this year.

**Speaker Shekarchi:** There's no need for it to get heard.

I also [spoke to](#) State Senator **Sandra Cano**, who heads the Senate Education Committee.

**Steve Ahlquist:** Let me ask about the attacks we're seeing nationally and locally on trans kids and trans rights. What are your thoughts on that?

**Sandra Cano:** ... As Chair of the Senate Education Committee, it was very scary that we had Senators introducing legislation to attack the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. That's why leadership matters. As Chair of the Education Committee, I said to the Senate President that this type of hate doesn't belong in the Senate and I'm not going to hear any of those bills in the Education Committee, and that was honored. That legislation was not heard in the Education Committee and that was intentional. It was because I decided it had no place in our legislative system.

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I know that for now, my transgender, gender-diverse, and transitioning siblings are safe from our state government passing laws to hurt them, but this is less true on a federal and municipal level. I also understand that the Rules of the House allow any Representative to demand a committee hearing on any piece of legislation they propose. The presence of this legislation in this committee does not reflect the moral failings and evil intentions of the House as a whole, but not treating this legislation as a serious threat to human rights would be.

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