

April 8, 2024

From Sydney Loiselle, LICSW, C-ACYFSW
In opposition to H7727

Dear Chair McNamara, First Vice Chair Noret, Second Vice Chair Kislak, and Members of the House Committee on Education:

I am writing in opposition of House Bill 7727. My name is Syd Loiselle (pronouns they/them) and I am a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker in Rhode Island and a member of the RI NASW's Policy and Advocacy Committee. In my clinical roles, I provide care to young people ages 4 to 25, primarily those who are trans and gender diverse. In addition to my professional experiences, I myself am a LGBTQ+ individual living in and accessing health care in Rhode Island, and attended all my years of school here.

Today, schools can at times be safe havens for students who aren't accepted at home. Many gender diverse students find support in their classmates, teachers, school staff, and school clubs. They find places where they can be themselves and explore their identity in a safe environment. For the students who do not have this experience at home, school can become their happy place. Their mental health is improved greatly by the support and acceptance they receive from peers and adults at school. This is life saving.

The proposed bills introduced in the Rhode Island State House, including this one, are built on model legislation from extremist ideological groups seeking to use the government to impose their views on everyone. Censoring accurate and robust education and preventing students from fully participating in school life is a disservice to all our young people.

This bill is not only unnecessary, but harmful. It is meant to create chaos, confusion, and exclusion. It is my greatest privilege to work with the gender diverse youth of Rhode Island. In order to protect this vulnerable population, I strongly oppose H7727 and urge the committee to reject this damaging bill.

Thank you for your time and your work on behalf of all people in the state of Rhode Island.

Respectfully submitted,

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