

House State Government and Elections Committee  
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The Honorable Representative Evan P. Shanley  
House State Government and Elections Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: In support of Bill 6125, HOUSE RESOLUTION EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY**

Dear Chairperson Shanley, and members of the House State Government and Elections Committee,

My name is Reverend DL Helfer, LCSW and I am a resident of Providence, Rhode Island. I am writing in strong support of House Bill 6125. I am also a proud transgender and queer individual.

House Bill 6125 is simply a resolution that acknowledges that Rhode Island stands firmly behind the belief that every human being has the right to love freely and live their lives openly as who they are. This bill is not and should not be considered controversial. LGBTQIA+ people face greater disparities in the areas of health, housing, and criminal justice and are many times more likely to be the victims of fatal violence. *We have the duty to do all that we can to protect all Rhode Islanders.*

*As both clergy and a social worker, I have too often seen evidence of suffering at the hands of the institutions meant to protect LGBTQIA+ individuals, from denial of legally appropriate services, as well as housing and work discrimination. As a human being, I have experienced increased hostility while seeking emergency care at RIH, increased difficulties in accessing gender affirming care, and blatant transphobia in the workplace. All in the last few months.*

Over the past few years, we have seen unrelenting escalating political attacks against the LGBTQIA+ community. The new presidential administration has been unwavering in its commitment to a systematic erasure campaign of the transgender and queer communities with the signing of many executive orders and support for limiting basic freedoms for these individuals. We need to stand strong as a state that prides itself on protection and equality for all its citizens.

*This resolution is not about granting "special rights"—it is about ensuring basic human rights. It is about affirming that all residents, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, deserve the same freedoms and protections as their fellow citizens. When we protect LGBTQ+ individuals*

from discrimination, we strengthen our communities, our economy, and our values of fairness and inclusion.

Under the Trump administration, a series of executive orders and policy changes have directly targeted LGBTQ+ rights, rapidly rolling back progress and protections. Some examples of these actions include:

- **The transgender military ban**, which reversed an Obama-era policy allowing transgender individuals to serve openly.
- **The rollback of healthcare protections**, allowing providers to deny care to LGBTQ+ individuals under the guise of religious freedom.
- **Attacks on workplace protections**, including attempts to limit protections for LGBTQ+ employees under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.
- **Efforts to erase transgender identities from federal policies**, including defining gender strictly based on biological sex at birth.

*These bans have emboldened some judges and school districts here in RI to “obey in advance,” to strip away rights regarding name changes, gender markers, and school supports for LGBTQ+ peoples. We are asking for this bill because the reaffirmation, that these rights still exists, has already been evidenced as a need, lest individual opinions further worsen the experience of this impacted community.*

These actions demonstrated just how quickly rights can be stripped away when they are not firmly protected by law. Executive orders can be reversed with the stroke of a pen, but legislation provides lasting protections that cannot be undone by a change in administration. Without clear, enforceable state-level protections, LGBTQ+ individuals remain vulnerable to discrimination in employment, housing, healthcare, and public services. Without this bill from you, others will feel emboldened to act on their own in ways that negatively impact LGBTQ+ individuals. And without the support we have worked so hard to enact with, LGBTQ+ individuals are at higher risk of harm, from suicidality to hatred encountered in the world.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration. I strongly encourage this committee to take a firm stand in favor of equality, safety, and dignity for all. I urge you to quickly vote to pass this resolution, **HB 6125**, to be clear in your commitment to ensuring that all Rhode Islanders have the same rights and protections, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.

Sincerely,

Reverend DL Helfer, LCSW  
Providence, RI