

April 3, 2025

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley
House Committee on State Government & Elections
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 Syd LaBonte and I am a resident of Providence, Rhode Island. I am excited to be writing in strong support of House Resolution 6125. I am a licensed clinical social worker here in Rhode Island, and have focused much of my work on supporting the trans & gender diverse community. I do this work both because I have a personal connection, and because I have a passion and commitment to supporting communities who have been oppressed, left out, and systematically underserved.

In my day to day work, and of course in my personal life as well, I interact with hundreds of transgender and non-binary RI residents (and that's not an exaggeration!). I have met at least a dozen families who have moved from other states, here to Rhode Island seeking safety, support, and legal protection. They have expressed such relief upon arrival, and have shown me just how much safety and comfort our little state can offer to this community.

As you can imagine, discussions of the current political climate and attacks against the LGBTQ+ community come up on a weekly, and often daily, basis in my clinical work. I talk with parents and caregivers, youth, young adults, and other providers about their fears, as well as their real experiences that come as a result of the harmful language and policy that has only continued to increase over the last year.

And what comes up, time and time again, is how happy my clients and patients are to be in Rhode Island. To be in a state that has overwhelmingly shown its support and commitment to ensuring the rights and joys of its queer and trans residents, of all ages, and all backgrounds. People sometimes tell me, as their therapist, that they would be worried if they lived somewhere else, but because they know about things like the Shield Bill and other legal protections here in RI, they are not experiencing that excess anxiety. They feel okay.

This resolution is a continuation of that sentiment. I am so pleased to be in a state where I can tell my clients (and myself): your community and your government care about you. This resolution is continued evidence of that fact, and I thank you in advance for your support and commitment.

Syd LaBonte, LICSW, C-ACYFSW
Providence, RI