

March 29, 2023

From Sydney Loiselle, LICSW  
In opposition to H 5688

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

My name is Syd Loiselle (they/them) and I am a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker in Rhode Island. I work as the Program Coordinator & Social Worker for the Hasbro Adolescent Gender & Sexuality Program, as well as at Tides Family Services as a home-based clinician. In my work, I primarily see young people ages 4 to 25, living in and attending school in Rhode Island. I myself attended kindergarten through high school graduation in Rhode Island.

Schools, especially public schools, are a place where our young people go to learn, grow, and explore. They engage in age appropriate learning around all subjects: reading, writing, math, and history. They also learn about themselves and the world around them. For years, parents have trusted our schools to teach students about these subjects. And as the world has evolved, so has education.

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.

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 H. 5688 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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