

April 8, 2024

From Sydney Loiselle, LICSW, C-ACYFSW  
In opposition to H7781

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 7781. 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.

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 H7781 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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