

April 1, 2025

The Honorable Joseph McNamara
House Education Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Thank you, chairperson McNamara and members of the committee. My name is Ryan Fontaine. I am writing in strong opposition to H 5604, a proposal to create a "Teachers' Bill of Rights."

While on the surface, this legislation appears to have laudable goals of ensuring teachers are afforded the respect and professional support they deserve, shrouded in the language is its true impact. This proposal would further a national campaign of anti-LGBTQ+ animus. Provisions within this proposal are similar to others rejected by this body, based on model legislation being pushed across the U.S. in a sweeping campaign attempting to exclude all LGBTQ+ people from public life.

This proposal would expand the definition of teacher to include almost all school system employees and authorize any covered individual to unilaterally and non-consensually out LGBTQ+ students without regard to student safety. It also seeks to expand free speech rights well beyond current laws and any reasonable expectations that could similarly lead to harm of LGBTQ+ and other minority students by allowing covered individuals to make disparaging statements about marginalized communities under the guise of personal opinion.

Rhode Island has a long history of working to ensure the equal dignity of everyone within the Ocean State, particularly LGBTQ+ people. That is why I am proud to live here and why our state is a beacon for those seeking refuge. I urge you to continue upholding our state's values by rejecting these attempts to import negative policies into Rhode Island.

Please do not support H 5604 as written.

Ryan Fontaine

District 71