

The Honorable Joseph M. McNamara

House Education Committee Rhode Island State House

82 Smith Street Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairperson McNamara and members of the committee:

My name is Denise Crooks and I am a resident of Cranston. I am writing in with my strong opposition to H5842. I am a therapist with a focus on providing care to transgender and non-binary people. I am also a parent. In both my personal and professional capacity I believe this bill would cause significant harm to Rhode Islanders.

I work with adult patients, but much of my work with transgender and non-binary patients involves working through the harms they have experienced through invalidating, transphobic experiences in school. These adverse experiences are sometimes so intense and overwhelming that trans and gender diverse students have dropped out of school. Telling trans girls that they can't plan on the sports team that aligns with their gender and with their friends creates a hostile, hurtful environment. This will have negative mental health effects for years to come.

As the parent of a cisgender daughter I also want to be clear that I am absolutely fine with her playing on girls' sports teams with trans girls. I think values around inclusion, teamwork, and fun should be the focus of sports, not policing girls' bodies or gender expression.

Please do not vote for this hateful, discriminatory bill that doesn't align with Rhode Island's values.

Sincerely,

Denise Crooks, MPH, LICSW