

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 Jo Knapp, I am an Academic Librarian and I am a resident of Pawtucket, Rhode Island. I am writing in opposition to House Bill 5842.

In brief, I believe you should oppose this bill for the simple fact that a Rhode Island where students can be subjected to genital and hormonal inspections in order to participate in extracurriculars with their peers is a worse Rhode Island than one in which students are allowed to participate freely. Beyond this, you should oppose the pathway to direct harm the language of this bill opens in section 16-117-4 (specifically subsection a) for any perceived slight based on physical variance. Additionally, it should be stated that the literature quoted across Section 1 as context for the bill is mostly decades old, with the only somewhat current readings being an opinion piece and a cherry-picked quote from a study that ignores that study's reported limitations, implications, and a non-zero amount of the study's own findings as well.

House Bill 5842 is, at a most generous, good-faith reading, a poorly researched and ill-informed piece of potential legislation. A less generous reading would call it out as an intentionally harmful potshot at a small, already marginalized group. Respectfully, I urge the committee to reject House Bill 5842 and to help keep Rhode Island a welcoming and inclusive place for its students.

Sincerely,
Jo Knapp, MLIS
Pawtucket, RI