

Thank you for this opportunity to stand in opposition to H -5842.

I am the Rev. Dr. Donnie Anderson and I live in Providence.

I realize that hearings on bills that have been submitted is part of the democratic process that we cherish, but it is a sad state of affairs that one of the consequences of this process is the pain that it generates in the people who belong to my community. Although I am older and understand the political process, the indignity of having to come before you to justify my existence as a transgender woman is humiliating. But as long as there are members of the legislature who insist on challenging the personhood and reality of members of the transgender community, we will continue to come back year after year to defend ourselves against the forces of ignorance and hate.

Although the legislation uses more wordy language, the purpose of this legislation is to separate all humankind by the presence or absence of a penis at birth. Life, however, is more complicated than this overly simplistic analysis. I will leave it to others to deal with the medical and psychological aspects of this over simplification and will just share with you the realities of dysphoria I experienced for ten decades. At age 9, after much thought, I tried to have a conversation with my mother about what I knew to be true about myself. With my mother's negative response, I now know that I entered a deep dark closet and suffered in that closet for six decades coming out just months before my seventieth birthday. Words fail to describe what it has been like to live my authentic self for these last seven plus years. I feel as though I am the most blessed person on planet earth.

This legislation challenges the very essence of my existence and essentially makes me out to be a man pretending to be a woman. Although I was born with a penis, I am now and always have been a woman. Nothing can ever change that reality. If our legislature truly cares about "fairness" for ALL the students in our educational system please consider the incredible harm this legislation would cause in the life of trans and gender diverse students. There is nothing "fair" about this legislation. Believe me, unless you have lived this, you have no idea of the harm you will cause.

Submitted by: Rev. Dr. Donnie Anderson