

Steven Sepe

From: Amber Ward <amber.s.ward@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 7, 2024 10:52 PM
To: House Health and Human Services Committee
Subject: NO to HR7884

Honorable Members of the House Health and Human Services Committee,

I am a resident of Bristol and work in Newport on the Naval Station. For nearly 6 years, I have served as a senior attorney for a Department of Defense institute that promotes the rule of law and compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law standards. I am also Captain in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve with nearly 19 years of honorable service, including more than six years of active duty service at military installations within Rhode Island. While my military assignments first brought my family to Rhode Island in 2014, our deep appreciation for the culture and sense of community, the quality of life, and the natural beauty of the State moved us to establish permanent roots here. My family is deeply proud of our home State's legacy as a leader in recognizing the humanity and equality of LGBTQ+ people for decades.

Today, I am compelled to write to you to express my grave concern over, abhorrent objection to, and full rejection of HR7884, Rhode Island's Children Deserve Help Not Harm Act -- Minor's Gender Transition. Although I understand that the Rules of the House allow any Representative to demand a committee hearing on any piece of legislation they propose, I urge the Committee to take swift and decisive action to not permit any consideration of this hateful bill to progress beyond this committee. I further urge you to send a strong and clear signal to the sponsors (Representatives Morgan, Quattrocchi, and Rea) that the voters of Rhode Island will not tolerate the introduction of hateful and deeply harmful anti-transgender legislation disguised in title-only as having a purpose other than to do tremendous, grievous harm.

As the proud parent of a bright and beautiful transgender teen and an ally to all transgender persons, I appeal to your decency and your humanity. This bill seeks to limit the rights of LGBTQ+ identifying people, with a specific animosity directed at highly vulnerable transgender, gender diverse, and transitioning youth. It is well and credibly documented that anti-LGBTQ laws and policies adversely impact the mental health of youth. A [2023 survey](#) conducted by the [Trevor Project](#) found "an overwhelming majority of LGBTQ youth have been negatively impacted by recent debates and laws around anti-LGBTQ policies and that many have also experienced victimization as a result." Specifically, that survey found that 71% of LGBTQ youth - including 86% of transgender and nonbinary youth - stated that state laws restricting the rights of LGBTQ+ youth have negatively impacted their mental health. I have seen first hand the dangerous, life-threatening impact such laws and media coverage thereof can have on transgender youth who are acutely aware of the sweeping campaign of attacks targeting transgender people across our great Nation. Transgender, gender diverse, and transitioning youth deserve to feel safe, secure and welcome in this State, and to have a life expectancy and quality that is not threatened by the perpetuation of this hateful anti-trans campaign. Rhode Island has the opportunity and responsibility to lead once again by saying NO to dangerous and disingenuous legislation that attacks our children and the LGTBQ community.

I oppose this hateful and harmful legislation, and urge this Committee and the Rhode Island Legislature to lead once again and say NO to HR788 and its harmful proposals.

I thank you for your time and your service to the people of Rhode Island, especially our most vulnerable.

Respectfully,

Amber Ward

Captain, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve
Bristol, RI