

PVD

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



Hon. Susan R. Donovan, Chair, House Committee on Health & Human Services
et al. Sitting Committee Members, Rhode Island General Assembly

Amnesty International USA Local Group 1016
ITEM: H7884
POSITION: OPPOSE

To The Esteemed Members of the House Committee on Health & Human Services;

Thank you for inviting testimony on House Bill 7884, which seeks to normalize bigoted language and barely-veiled hate speech against protected categories of people in our state under the guise of public policy. Amnesty International USA local group 1016 opposes this bill, and all other gross attempts to taint civic discourse and procedure, in the strongest possible language.

Every private citizen is allowed to have bigoted opinions and express them; like any other speech, the state must not restrict or proscribe that except to prevent incitement to violence. Every person with bigoted opinions is allowed to identify and associate with other like-minded people; this, too, is a First Amendment issue. Furthermore, any association of people can petition their representatives to legislate based on those bigoted opinions. Their representatives might even hold the same bigoted opinions; all protected by the First Amendment. Amnesty PVD understands that the state's branches of government, state agencies or officials, must not restrict these activities, either in law or by enforcement. However, our communities cannot and will not be silent while a small group of extremely vocal bigots attempt to misappropriate our public fora in order to spread political propaganda and normalize language that dehumanizes and disenfranchises GLBTQ people in our state. It is truly unacceptable to see our public square being used against the human rights of a group of residents.

Amnesty PVD strongly urges the committee to hold this bill indefinitely pending withdrawal by its sponsor.