

RI Community Action

Defending the Rights of Vulnerable Populations which include Transgender and Gender Diverse People

As a group, we reject any attempt to take away the rights to bodily autonomy. We reject attempts to roll back the important gains that have been made for our communities, including LGBTQ+ people of all ages.

Bodily autonomy is about each of us having the right to show up as our whole, authentic selves and to strive for our dreams and our potential without judgment or harassment. **We all deserve safety, dignity, and the freedom to make decisions about our own lives and families.**

Yet, there are people in Rhode Island who strongly disagree.

As an example, at the end of 2023 in Foster/Gloucester (via Steve Ahlquist) comes this:

Over two-dozen folks came to raise objections to the school policy supporting transgender and gender diverse students. This policy just asserts state standard (RIDE) policy, as it always has. Their hate did not prevail, but it has not gone away either.

Civil rights are advanced by personal storytelling. Transgender people speaking up, sharing their stories is the best response to hate. We must rally our communities in support of their voices.

As Steve noted, even a few supporters and allies can make a difference. Our purpose in this initial allyship piece is to empower each other to support our gender diverse and LGBTQ+ community members, no matter their age, and create communities built on safety, dignity, and freedom for all of us.

WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT THIS COMMUNITY ACTION :

1. Keep up with your local school committee. Find the annual meeting notice with the dates for the year. Then, check for meeting agendas 48 hours in advance. Agendas can be found on school district websites or <https://opengov.sos.ri.gov/openmeetings>
2. Attend and support allies on school boards and in local governmental positions as they need your support just like other folks with the same beliefs in the room.
3. (ACLU-RI) Voicing Concerns: Public Comment Policies of Rhode Island City and Town Councils and School Committees. bit.ly/ACLU-RI-School-Committees

4. Follow organizations you trust to keep you up to date on issues and legislation around causes you care about. Examples: ACLU RI, GLAD, our sibling org, The Womxn Project
5. Call, write, and visit your legislators to voice opposition to bills that impair dignity, safety, and freedom, and support of bills that promote wellbeing of marginalized groups like LGBTQIA+ people. bit.ly/Leg-Guide
6. Join The Womxn Project at the State House on lobby days to learn how to make a direct impact, in person, on our representatives. bit.ly/Lobbying2024
7. Please sign-up today to receive updates on this issue, the events and actions The Womxn Project Education Fund plans to use to stop hate in RI. bit.ly/CALL-RI

IMMEDIATE HELP: Attend Local or State Government Meetings

Your presence at a school committee, town council, or state house hearing is important. VOICING your support of an issue is even moreso. If that is not comfortable, your presence is powerful and helpful in showing collective support.

Not ready to speak but want to go in solidarity:

- Be seated, ideally, with a sign or message on your person in support of your issue
- Wear pins, stickers, bandanas or other symbols of allyship. This helps elected officials and other allies there for the same reason.
- Outside a meeting room: Holding signs sends a strong signal to the elected officials about an issue. Make sure they can see you and read your sign. Think of yourself as a walking billboard.

When you are ready to speak in support:

- You are helping support the topic in a way that is public and on record. That message is important.
- Stick with what you know. Personal stories are best if you have one. But share only what you're comfortable with and that you have permission to share. You're not obligated to provide every detail of your personal life. Remember that testimony is a public record.
- If you are comfortable, share a picture of yourself on social media with a follow up message in the positive slant acknowledging your strength by participating in democracy.

Policy and bill proposals that harm the dignity, safety, freedom of vulnerable members of our communities, including LGBTQ+ people, are on the rise. Rhode Island is often thought of as a safe state, but it is not immune from these far-right attacks. They are often presented as means to 'protect children,' or 'protect parents,' but, in reality, enforce a singular view of the world on everyone.

We have to keep showing up at the ballot box, the State House, in small town school boards and town councils, and much more because our opposition is there.

People who support a more just Rhode Island are the majority, but if the minority is LOUD and willing to do the work, then all our rights, health and wellbeing are at risk.

Thank you for being in this with us!

bit.ly/CALL-RI