

Seacoastonline.com, NH, USA

As a transgender person in New Hampshire I have faced discrimination

Posted Jan 18, 2018 at 1:39 PM

Jan. 18 -- To the Editor:

The NH legislature is currently considering HB 1319, a transgender nondiscrimination bill. The bill would ban discrimination on the basis of gender identity in employment, housing and public places. As a transgender person and lifelong NH resident myself, I have faced discrimination in a variety of arenas. This discrimination is unfair and goes against the values of our state and our nation.

Transgender people deserve the same freedoms and opportunities as their non-transgender peers. We face massive levels of unemployment, housing discrimination and homelessness, hate crimes and violence, discrimination in medical care and ejection from public places. I am a college professor and I often ask my students whether there is legal protection for transgender people in our state. Almost all of the hands go up in the affirmative. It's surprising to know that NH is currently the only state in New England that does not protect people on the basis of gender identity. It is high time that NH follows the example of our neighbors throughout New England and protects its citizens and visitors from discrimination. In addition, they can follow the other 18 states and 200 cities and towns throughout the country that have such protections, protections which were first offered in Minnesota back in the 1970s.

There have been two prior attempts to pass this legislation before. In 2009 it was defeated and in 2017 it was tabled. A big reason for this outcome was the so-called "bathroom bill" strategy. This strategy asserts that women and children are put at risk in public restrooms due to the passage of this legislation. This is absurd - we all care about safety and privacy in bathrooms, including those of us who are transgender. There has been no uptick in violence in all of the states and cities where this legislation has been passed. And that's why the NH Chiefs of Police and NH Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence support this legislation. It is my hope that both legislators and constituents will not fall for this fear-mongering tactic once again.

I urge readers to do all they can to help get this legislation passed. It is time that all Granite Staters, including transgender people, are offered protection in housing, public places and employment and are able to have the same freedom and opportunities as everyone else.

*Dr. Joelle Ruby Ryan*

*Newmarket*

<http://www.seacoastonline.com/news/20180118/as-transgender-person-in-new-hampshire-i-have-faced-discrimination>

Concord Monitor, NH, USA

Editorial: Let's protect transgender people from discrimination

Friday, January 19, 2018

Lawmakers are once again debating whether to update the state's nondiscrimination laws by adding protections for transgender people. We have long argued for such a measure, and we know well the argument of those who oppose it. The challenge for the Legislature is to sort through facts and testimony to determine who faces a greater threat in this state: those who come into contact with transgender people or transgender people themselves.

Under current law, the state protects people from discrimination based on age, sex, race, creed, color, marital status, familial status, physical or mental disability, and national origin. House Bill 1319 would add the words "gender identity" to that list.

The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey provides guidance on why such a change is necessary. Of the 225 transgender people in New Hampshire who responded to the survey, 15 percent said they had lost a job because of their gender identity or expression. One in 5 reported being fired, denied a promotion or not hired based on their gender identity. Twenty-three percent said they had faced some form of housing discrimination. More than half said they avoided using a public restroom because they feared a confrontation. Many respondents also cited examples of discrimination involving education, health care and law enforcement.

We understand that there are many people in New Hampshire who have a difficult time wrapping their mind around the idea that a person can feel as though they were born in the wrong body. It is no small feat to see the world through the eyes of another, to experience their fear and pain as your own. We also understand that there are those who worry that somebody will use the protections proposed in House Bill 1319 in a way that could pose a danger to the public, especially women and children. But again, we ask lawmakers to consider what is more likely to happen: that without explicit protections many of the estimated 4,500 transgender people in New Hampshire will continue to face discrimination or that some bad actor will find a way to use those new protections to harm others.

As New Hampshire once again debates this important issue, we hope that all involved take the time to listen to those with whom they disagree and that logic overrides fear.

<http://www.concordmonitor.com/Why-transgender-people-need-discrimination-protection-14975140>