

I am writing in opposition to HB 1144 which will outlaw gender neutral bathrooms in public schools.

The concern looking to be addressed with this bill is that of privacy; whether the gender neutral bathrooms provide adequate privacy for students. I contend that these restrooms offer more privacy than the traditional public restrooms. The gender neutral bathrooms being opposed are those where there are individual stalls with a common area for handwashing. When we think of bathroom stalls, we often think of the metal stalls that are typical of a public restroom which do not go floor to ceiling and have gaps around the edges of the door and the frame. These are not the type of stalls that are being used for gender neutral restrooms. Instead, the "stalls" are individual, private, rooms similar to private handicapped restrooms you may see in schools or other public places. This actually provides more privacy protection for students wishing to use the restroom without being seen or heard by other students.

With the subject of privacy being addressed, I also wanted to touch on why these restrooms are a good idea.

- Gender neutral bathrooms can be a safe space for people whose gender presentation doesn't conform to expectations.
- Gender neutral bathrooms can demonstrate respect for people's gender identity
- Gender neutral bathrooms can eliminate stress, anxiety, and mistreatment for transgender and gender non-conforming students.
- Transgender and gender non-conforming people often face discrimination, harassment, or violence in bathrooms.
- Gender neutral bathrooms also provide a safe space for all students who endure bullying.

I want to highlight this last reason for supporting gender neutral bathrooms. Because each room is entirely private and there is an open area for handwashing, gender neutral bathrooms actually decrease bullying in schools. School bathrooms are often a hotspot for school bullying because of a lack of supervision. About 20% of middle and highschool students will be bullied. Most of this bullying, especially of physical nature, occurs in places where there is little or no supervision, such as hallways, stairwells, and bathrooms.

When we create a safe place for our transgender and gender non-conforming youth, we are also creating a safe place for all students.

I thank you for your time and consideration.

Devon Dolney