

Testimony in Opposition to HB 1181

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When an average person looks at me, they see a woman. But they aren't looking at genitals, chromosomes, or anatomical markers. They are looking at the way I chose to style my hair, do my makeup, the clothes I chose, the name I use, the way I carry myself and the way I speak to others. That is gender. When a physiologist looks at me, they see a female. They are looking at physical characteristics associated with sex. That is the fundamental difference between gender and sex. Sex is everything given to us by our anatomy, while gender is the way we chose to walk through the world. Many people, including myself, are lucky to feel comfortable experiencing life the way someone with our anatomy is expected to. That is called being cisgender. Still many others have lived experiences, personalities, a spirit that leads them to a different truth about their authentic self. They know that they are their realest version of themselves when they can walk through the world without expectations based on anatomy they had no part in choosing. That is how transgender people understand themselves. They are not confused about who they are or how they should act.

For many of us, the idea is frightening. Most cisgender people have lived their lives with a basic understanding of how males should act like men and females should act like women. The ideals we associate with masculinity and femininity don't necessarily have any basis in the fundamental differences in anatomy. They come to us through years of social development and tradition; relics of an era where basic survival often necessitated certain types of work from certain types of people. In the year 2025, Americans are lucky to enjoy enough basic needs and comforts that we have the time, space, and opportunity to explore the way our society is structured. We have no reason to punish or inhibit anyone who wants to live in a way that doesn't conform to our traditional gender/sex binary. For those who believe man and woman are singular creations of God, remember that many of his greatest creations are the beautiful moments in between, sunset, sunrises, the waxing moon.

Whether or not transgender people make sense to you, whether you understand them or not, acknowledge that calling a person what they want to be called is a sign of respect for them and will cause no harm to you. As the president of a club whose purpose is to support these individuals, I have had the pleasure of knowing many non-gender-conforming people. All have been happy to share their lived experience with anyone who wants to understand them. Before you vote in favor of HB 1181, I hope you have the opportunity to have a conversation with a transgender person. Seek to understand what makes them who they are beyond their sex. You will be better for having known them and seeing the world through new eyes.