

Chairman Beard and committee members

My name is Chaz Brobst. I come as a concerned citizen and advocate for LGBTQIA2S+ youth and individuals. I urge you to Do Not Pass HB 1144.

I have been out of school for 20 plus years. I went to a small rural school and was not openly “out.” I didn’t have words for what I felt at that time, I just knew I did not feel comfortable using the girl’s bathroom. Because I felt uncomfortable, I would often go all day without using the restroom. Even more, I would often stay after school for FFA activities. Therefore, between the school day and after school activities, it was often 9 hours without using the bathroom during the day. This means that as a female, from a health standpoint, I was not taking good care of things that needed to be taken care of.

The locker room was a whole other issue. I enjoyed playing basketball, but because of being uncomfortable in the locker room, I only played basketball in elementary school for 1 year. The thought of changing and showering in the locker room gave me so much anxiety and fear. Even physical education class was a struggle. I would not shower after class and because I would not shower, I would not do anything that would make me get too sweaty. I hardly participated in anything we were doing.

Even now, I struggle with using the bathroom. Every time I need to use a restroom in public, I have the anxiety and fear build up as soon as I see a Women’s Restroom and Men’s Restroom sign. A decision has to be made in that moment. I do not feel like a Women’s Restroom is the right one and neither does a men’s restroom. No person should have such anxiety and fear to use something as basic as a bathroom. I do use a women’s restroom, but I often get dirty, or questioning looks when walking in. There needs to be better options across the board.

Youth in school, who are supposed to be getting an education and preparing for their future, should not have to be overcome with fear and anxiety around using the restroom. A student that needs to use the restroom and is struggling with that feeling is not in a head space to be taking in the information that is being taught. Struggling with something as simple as using the restroom is preventing students from learning.

It is not only LGBTQIA2S+ students that would benefit from gender neutral bathrooms. From personal experience, I know at least two boys have been molested by fellow males in bathrooms and locker rooms. Any student that feels more comfortable using a more private area should have that right.

Gender neutral bathrooms are needed in all schools and public places. A bathroom that has full door stalls and a shared sink provides just as much privacy and even more privacy than a typical Girl's Bathroom or Boy's Bathroom. Locker rooms with private showers and dressing areas will benefit anyone that struggles with being in a group setting.

I have not seen anything saying that schools will be removing the Girl's and Boy's Bathrooms. If that is where your child is comfortable then great, they can use that bathroom. Having a gender-neutral bathroom makes using the bathroom for youth who just doesn't feel like either bathroom fits for them or those students that are just more comfortable using a more private bathroom.

Let's make our schools more about educating students and not about causing anxiety and fear around using the bathroom.

I urge you to Do Not Pass HB 1144.

Chaz Brobst
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