In regard to HB 1522: I ask your committee to take SWIFT AND IMMEDIATE action in opposition and DO NOT PASS this unbelievably outrageous government overreach.

First: There is no transgender emergency that requires an Emergency Action by the state legislature. 2% of the population is trans. TWO PERCENT. Would you declare an emergency over the maybe 10% of the population that is born left-handed exploring the option publicly and socially of embracing their left-handedness, instead of forcing themselves to act right-handed? Of course not! So why are we engaging in panicked legislation about transkids socially exploring their own identity in school? Who does this hurt or threaten? No one. Because for kids who aren't trans, even if, by virtue of association with a trans classmate, they explore their own gender identity, NOTHING WILL CHANGE! THEY WILL STILL BE CIS!!! And GOOD FOR THEM for engaging in a little bit of self-reflection to determine who they are for themselves, rather than just unthinkingly moving through the world defining themselves by what someone told them they are based on whether they have internal or external genitalia!

This is the Satanic Panic all over again--and boy, wasn't that absolutely humiliating to have participated in, looking back?

SECOND: granting a person an accommodation for their perceived identity is done EVERY DAY, EVERYWHERE, IN EVERY FORUM. "Do you prefer to be addressed as Ms., Miss, or Mrs?" You think that question has nothing to do with gender identity? And would you tell me I'm unreasonable for asking to be called Ms. Dillin, rather than Mrs.? Why would you! "Is Robert here?" "Robert is my dad, I go by Bob." ROBERT isn't his identity. BOB is. WHO WOULD FIGHT WITH THIS? What about girls named Samantha who go by Sam? Is that an accommodation that conflicts with their "biological sex" and assumed gender identity? My first name is Amalia. Do you know how long it took me to even learn how to spell it, because I NEVER used it, EVER, until I went off to college? I had a family nickname, and that was what everyone called me, at my request--in school and otherwise. Amalia wasn't my identity. It didn't MATTER what my birth certificate said. I chose to make it my identity, later, for purely mercenary reasons, too--because there are so few Amalias, it made me feel unique, it set me apart. It could be a conversation starter! Does that make my identity now or then less valid? Of course not. I grew and changed and made the choice for myself of who I wanted to be and how I wanted to be addressed and no one thought anything of it at any point along the way.

Okay, so none of those examples are pronouns. But can you see, by extension, how absolutely outrageous it is that we're declaring the accommodation of preferred pronouns in schools an emergency situation? What kind of nonsensical grammar policing is this???

Historically speaking, the singular they (just like the singular you) is as old as the English language. It's only relatively recently that people have taken exception to its use. Forms of address come in and out of fashion, culturally and sociallyits totally normal for shifts to happen over the course of any period of time. Who cares if that's how a person prefers to be referred to? It's a word that more specifically encompasses their identity as an individual! Just like Ms. or Bob or Sam or people who go by Jack but are legally named John choose the form of address that most suits THEIR identity, too. THAT'S ALL ANY PRONOUN IS--a means by which to differentiate one person from another, indirectly, more precisely in regard to who they have indicated they are. And it is not my business to tell someone who they are or are not. It isn't yours, either. And it CERTAINLY is not the states right to decide for them.

So I can only assume the problem is that these kids might ask to be referred to by a pronoun or name in school that their parents don't know about--that maybe they're wrestling with their identity and afraid of how their family will respond. Isn't it safer for these kids to be able to engage in that exploration with the support of their peers, socially, openly, than to do it in total isolation, thinking themselves entirely alone, with no one they can trust, afraid that if they reveal themselves, they'll be made homeless by parents who don't understand? At best. When suicide rates for trans kids and LGBTQIA+ folks on the whole are so high, why would we want to drive them deeper into isolation with legislation like this? Make schools so inhospitable that they have nowhere they're allowed to exist as the people they know they are? If the state decides they aren't allowed to exist in school, and they aren't allowed to exist at home--where does that leave them? Is the state's preference, is our legislator's preference that these kids not live at all? Because if so, there's a word for that that none of us will like: it's called genocide. Thats what bills like this seem to be leading us toward.

This isn't a big leap. It's right there in the bill. NO ACCOMODATIONS ARE ALLOWED TO BE MADE FOR ANY CHILD OR ELSE THE SCHOOL DISTRICT CAN BE SUED. Making room for people to pursue legal actions and obtain "damages" for providing a child a pronoun or unisex bathroom accommodation HEAVILY IMPLIES that these kids are not safe at home. That their families will go to such lengths as taking LEGAL ACTION to MAKE SURE there is no place they are allowed to be themselves, safely.

Don't you find that a little concerning? If you're the kid in this scenario, what are your options? How do you navigate a world that took EMERGENCY ACTION to ensure that you were denied ALL RIGHTS to be you? Even such a small thing as being referred to as they or her or ze at school, to use a bathroom where you wouldn't be bullied or beat up or harassed and attacked. Would you do this to a kid whose nickname didn't match their perceived gender? And if you wouldn't, why would you do this?

THIRDLY: Unisex bathrooms exist so anyone can use them. Trying to dictate who gets to use a unisex bathroom entirely defeats the whole purpose. And there should be unisex bathroom options EVERYWHERE FOR EVERYONE AS A BASIC COURTESY TO BEGIN WITH, for people who need them be it for reasons of discomfort with being forced to use a bathroom that doesn't correspond with their gender or the need to retreat somewhere private for social support or help or just extra privacy AT ALL (because we all know that kids can be cruel for less reason than questioning ones gender identity and bullies are going to bully) or to allow a parent to help their child of a different gender or sex. Think of the dads with little girls and the moms with little boys. Don't they deserve unisex bathroom access too? Why isn't a unisex bathroom option in every public building already the default? I know I've used the word outrageous a lot but I'm utterly flabbergasted by this. If a kid needs a different bathroom because they have a shy bladder, would you deny them? If they need a different bathroom because of any medical condition, would the state stop the school from allowing them one? What if theyre being bullied by someone of their own gender and the bathroom just isnt safe for them because thats the place their bully always attacks? WHY then, would the state involve itself here? These asks, these accommodations--they're SO SMALL!!! And the response by our legislators is SO OVERBLOWN!! It would be LAUGHABLE if the consequences to these already marginalized kids were not so horrific. If this bill did not literally mean the difference between making it through childhood to adulthood ornot, for a large percentage of them.

Fourthly: Kids asking for accommodation for an animal identity isn't even something that is happening anywhere and its inclusion in this bill calls the whole rest of the legislation into question by any reasonable, thinking, rational person. In fact, its inclusion suggests to me that the authors are completely untethered from reality and they have no business writing legislation of any kind because their perception of the world and this state has been so warped beyond reason they are no longer fit for the office they hold.

For these and a host of reasons beyond those that I have laid out, I am BEGGING you all not to pass this bill. It never should have been written at all.