

From: Wiley Reading

Sent: Sunday, April 02, 2017 12:45 PM

To: helen@helenhead.com; Tom Stevens; Ron Wild; Job Tate; Kevin Christie; Rachael Fields; Diana Gonzalez; Mary Howard; Heidi Scheuermann; Brian Smith; Vicki Strong; Tommy Walz

Subject: Support for H 333

Ladies and Gentlemen of the House Committee,

I'm writing in support of the bill H 333 to make single stall restrooms gender-free (or gender neutral.)

I am a trans man who doesn't "pass" one hundred percent of the time. That means that although I dress in men's clothes, take hormones, and have had surgery, many people assume I'm a woman. This is uncomfortable for me, and it is especially uncomfortable in bathrooms. I use the men's room, and I already get strange looks or feel an undercurrent of hostility when I try to use the bathroom. Furthermore, the risk that I will be harassed or assaulted in a bathroom (although thank god it hasn't happened yet) is high (see [this survey](#), which reports the percentage of trans people harassed or assaulted in a bathroom at 12%. The rest of [this article](#) is worth a read as well.)

Recently, I needed to go to the bathroom in the Burlington mall. The only public restrooms are downstairs and in poor condition, including a broken door to the only stall in the men's room. The door is so broken that while I was using the restroom I had to hold the door from the toilet to keep it from swinging open. Imagine how embarrassed you'd feel if someone walked in and you were sitting on a toilet, exposed. Now imagine that the person who has walked in expects a man, and sees someone sitting down to pee. Best case scenario is that my transgender status is revealed to a total stranger, which is humiliating enough. Worst case scenario is that the person who walks in on me verbally or physically harasses me.

Single stall gender-neutral bathrooms are a simple, safe solution to the problem of bathroom access. They eliminate the hostility I feel when I'm simply trying to use the bathroom in peace, and they cut down on the potential for nerve-wracking situations like the one I described above.

Obviously the real solution is greater acceptance of transgender people, but in the mean time, having a safe and private place to use the restroom would save me embarrassment, fear and discomfort, and prevent potential harassment and assault. And I am far from the only person who would benefit from this bill being passed--trans women are at even greater risk of harassment and abuse in bathrooms, and trans children are especially vulnerable.

I urge you not to let this bill be thrown out, and please vote for it when it comes up for a vote in 2018. It would mean so much to me to know that I could participate in community life without having to experience fear and shame any time I need to use the bathroom.

Sincerely,

Wiley Reading,

Burlington resident