

April 11, 2017

Testimony by Brenda Churchill, Bakersfield, Vermont

In support of H.333 An act relating to identification of gender-free restrooms in public buildings and places of public accommodations.

My name is Brenda Churchill, I am a resident in the town of Bakersfield, Franklin County. I identify as transgender. I have lived in Vermont for over 25 years. I speak to you today as a private citizen, recently retired from 20 years with the phone company.

As of March 30, 2017, the Human Rights Campaign reports 130 anti LGBTQ bills have been introduced in 36 states. Of those bills, bathroom bills are the most publicized and contentious of all. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, there is an anti-LGBTQ hate group called the Alliance Defending Freedom that is behind many of the bills that target transgender youth from using facilities consistent with their gender identity. Think HB 2 in North Carolina and it's impact on my community and businesses.

You may all be relieved to know this is not what I am here to talk about today. There is nothing in H 333 that comes close to defining or worrying about who is using a toilet in a single use facility. There is nothing discriminatory about naming a toilet gender-free. The bill says nothing about which toilet I have to use or what gender I have to be to use it. It is really a simple bill, helping to make it safer for anyone to use whatever single use toilet by labeling it in a way that makes sense.

Currently, when I am in need of a restroom, I often have single-user toilets already mapped out so that I do not even worry about where to stop. I travel to NY and New Hampshire and know where most every business and public building is that has a single-user toilet. Many locations I stop at have already figured out that it is just good business to provide a neutral place for people of any gender to take care of their most basic of human needs.

I am betting that you don't know there is an APP for that? Originally called Safe2Pee, now RefugeRestrooms.org, this is web application that seeks to provide safe restroom access for transgender, intersex, and gender nonconforming individuals. I envision, with your passage of this bill, that our state will lead all other states on this user friendly application, showing visitors and residents traveling within Vermont where they may safely use a gender free restroom.

Remembering that this bill applies to everyone and hurts no one is what is important. Vermont is a state that often has show the rest of the United States where to go and how to get there.

Please support this bill so that no one has to worry about the most basic human need.

Thank you for letting me speak with you today.