



OUTRIGHT VERMONT

hope, equity, power!
FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH

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To Chair Lyons, Vice Chair Gulick, and members of the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare,

Outright VT respectfully submits this written testimony to ask your committee to please support H.657 and pass it out of committee with no substantive changes. At Outright VT, we lean into the wisdom and expertise of LGBTQ+ youth. They understand the need to bolster essential protections for all young people in Vermont. This is a crucial step toward building better systems by centering the needs and voices of youth in our communities.

Young people have the power and ability to succeed. This bill ensures that independent or unaccompanied youth have the agency to access the resources and support they need to succeed. It creates normalcy for youth who may otherwise be blocked from everyday experiences like field trips and waives fees for documentation like driver's licenses.

Further, by eliminating asset limits for Reach Up and ensuring that social security benefits go directly to young people H. 657 provides corrections for practices that disempower youth. It restricts the use of restraint and seclusion for young people and increases reporting and accountability, moving us closer to a world where young people have the support they need to create their own path forward.

LGBTQ+ youth face disparate rates of homelessness, family rejection, and systems involvement compared with their cisgender and heterosexual peers. Unprecedented federal attacks have made their position even more precarious, as fear mongering turns into policy decisions and threatens access to care, resources, and public life. In Vermont, we can meet this moment. We must uphold Vermont values even when it is hard.

Our state is stronger when every person who lives here is treated with respect and has autonomy and agency. Thank you for working to ensure that youth in Vermont have what they need to thrive.

With gratitude,

Amanda Rohdenburg,
Senior Director of Advocacy & Land Stewardship