

Transgender Experiences in the Commonwealth



Massachusetts
Transgender
Political
Coalition

People with diverse gender identities and expressions suffer discrimination and harassment throughout Massachusetts. As we wait to hear whether “*An Act Relative to Gender-Based Discrimination and Hate Crimes*” will pass, organizations throughout Massachusetts continue to hear about transgender-related discrimination, harassment and violence.

May and June Intakes

Organizations received 74 calls in May and June on transgender-related discrimination, harassment and violence. A short sampling follows:

- A transgender man reported being spit at by someone in a passing car. (6/21/10)
- A transgender woman called because she is thinking about coming out to her employer but wants to know if she is protected against possible discrimination. (6/22/10)
- An older transgender woman reported being verbally harassed in a women's bathroom in a shopping mall. (6/4/10)
- A staff member from a women's shelter called because they wanted to admit a transgender woman to their shelter but had questions about what the law said on this issue. (6/3/10)
- A transgender man called to discuss ways to respond to anti-transgender slurs spoken to him while walking down the street. (5/18/10)

Student Faces Discrimination from Local College

On April 1, a student at Salem State College received a letter from the Office of Student Life informing her that her request for student housing was denied. The letter stated that a Massachusetts license indicating “Sex:Female” was not enough, and a birth certificate is needed in order for her housing request to be accepted. Yet she had already provided her driver's license which is more than any other student is asked to do when applying for housing.

The college's letter provided her with three housing options: live in gender-neutral housing; live in male-only housing, or not apply for housing at all. The letter also insisted that she “accurately [indicate her] biological sex...as male.” The student has been forced to select gender neutral housing as a male – a housing option for those who identify as transgender at Salem State. But the student identifies as female and not transgender. In the past she has lived in gender neutral dorms where she was placed on an all-male floor and forced to share a bathroom with men which was traumatizing.

Salem State College's mission states that they “provide a high quality, student-centered education that prepares a diverse community of learners to contribute responsibly and creatively to a global society, and serve as a resource to advance the region's cultural, social and economic development.” That's all the student wants – an opportunity to live and learn in a safe environment. Until Massachusetts passes a comprehensive non discrimination and hate crimes bill students are at the mercy of the educational institutions they attend for these protections.