

Dear Representative Brian Ashe and Senator Gale Candaras,

My name is Scott Olsen and I live in Hampden with my husband. I am a lawyer and an out member of the LGBT community.

I am writing to urge you to support ***An Act Relative to Equal Access in Hospitals, Public Transportation, Nursing Homes, Supermarkets, Retail Establishments, and all other places open to the public***, introduced in the House by Representatives Carl Sciortino and Byron Rushing and in the Senate by Senator Ben Downing and Sonia Chang-Diaz. This proposed law would prohibit discrimination in places of public accommodation such as polling places, stores, restaurants, and public lecture halls.

I believe this bill is important because I believe that it is important for everyone to enjoy equal access and protection under the law. As someone who is an ally to the trans community, I want to live in a world where my trans and gender-nonconforming friends are free to go to the movies, visit the library, and ride public transportation without facing discriminatory comments or being turned away unfairly because of who they are. Transgender and gender-nonconforming people are our neighbors, friends, family members, and fellow citizens. It's important that we start respecting them as such.

With the passage of this law, Massachusetts would send a clear message to its citizens that all people are entitled to feel safe in their communities and to be offered the full protection of the law, regardless of their gender identity or expression.

By offering protection in places of public accommodation where people experience harassment and discrimination, this law would increase productivity, freedom and safety for transgender youth and adults who are employees, consumers, residents and students.

Please help Massachusetts join the many communities, including the states of Rhode Island, Vermont, and Maine, which already provide protection in places of public accommodation on the basis of gender identity and/or expression.

When this bill passes I will feel more confident that my transgender friends will be treated respectfully and like equals.

Respectfully,

Scott Olsen