

Dear Senator Patricia Jehlen and Representative Denise Provost,

My name is Megan McKinley. I live on 12 Beacon Terrace in Somerville with my husband and our younger daughter. I'm an office assistant, a mother putting my two older kids through college, and a proud transgender woman.

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 hospitals, clinics, libraries, and polling places.

I believe this bill is important because as a transgender woman I have experienced harsh forms of discrimination in public places that make me feel alienated from other members of the community and even put my health and safety at risk. Recently, I cut my hand while making dinner and had to be driven to the emergency room to get stitches. Even though my trip to the ER had nothing whatsoever to do with my gender identity, I still had to deal with rude comments from hospital staff and other people in the waiting room. This kind of discrimination made my ER trip a total nightmare and left me feeling scared and humiliated in front of my family. Right now there are no laws prohibiting the staff in places like the hospital waiting room I visited from harassing me because of my gender identity. There are also no laws that require staff or management to intervene when they see harassment happening in their establishment. Passing the Equal Access Bill would provide needed protections for people like me to live in peace.

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.

The passage of this law would make me and my family feel safer in public places like restaurants and hospitals and help us to live our lives in peace.

Respectfully,

Megan McKinley