

Statement by Samuel Paunetto
Opposition Testimony for SB180
Committee on Public Health & Welfare
January 9, 2023

Chair Sen. Richard Hilderbrand and committee members:

Thank you for providing the opportunity to submit written testimony on senate bill SB180. As a licensed master social worker, I firmly believe that public policy should always be informed by data and research that is aligned with academic consensus. In the social work field, one of our main priorities is to support policies that uphold the best practices of public health. Our history shows that when religious bigotry, or anti-academia sentiments are allowed to inform public policy the results can be devastating for society.

The academic consensus among the current scholarly research overwhelmingly supports an inclusive and affirming lens with the trans community in all areas of society. The consensus is that gender is a spectrum, and it is not binary. Any bill that opposes this academic lens represents a risk to public health. Research shows that risks related to the development of severe mental health illnesses, and the increase of suicide rates are directly linked to exclusionary policies against marginalized communities. Other social determinants compound this effect when it overlaps with race and class. Directly impacting life expectancy, social mobility, and overall outlook in life.

In addition, research shows that the active participation of trans athletes in sports does not infringe upon the opportunities of other athletes. It is important to understand that the main organizations that represent more than half a million clinical practitioners in the mental health fields, like the APA, NASW, and others, have presented a vast amount of scholarly research and data that clearly speaks against exclusionary policies towards the LGBTQI+ community. ([Just the Facts Coalition](#))

As a social worker active in providing lifesaving services to our marginalized communities, I am concerned about these exclusionary policies. Social workers are always available as a primary source of academic and clinical feedback, providing a public health lens to the policy-making process. We are always willing to illustrate our legislative body on these matters and meet them where they are.

As we continue to strengthen alliances throughout our beautiful state, our expectation is that the public policy framework of our state will continue to improve. By making sure that sound research and data analysis are the main factors informing the dialogue around every new piece of legislation. Especially around policy that impacts public health outcomes among at-risk communities. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input, and for the time and attention you're giving to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Samuel Paunetto

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