



**TESTIMONY OF GLBTQ LEGAL ADVOCATES & DEFENDERS
IN SUPPORT OF S. 2614**

State of Rhode Island General Assembly
Senate Committee on Judiciary
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Submitted by:
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Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony in support of S. 2614. As you may know, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders works in New England and nationally to create a just society free of discrimination based on gender identity and expression, HIV status, and sexual orientation through strategic litigation, public policy advocacy, and education. GLAD supports S. 2614, which ensures that when a transgender person has taken steps to have their gender identity recognized during their life, that their gender identity is respected after death. Rhode Island has a proud history of respecting and supporting transgender people. In 2001, Rhode Island became one of the first states to provide non-discrimination protections on the basis of gender identity and expression. R.I. Gen. Laws §§ 28-5-6(11) (employment); 34-37- 3(9) (housing and credit); and 11-24-2.1 (i) (public accommodations). The passage of S. 2614 is a critical opportunity for Rhode Island to continue its leadership by respecting the dignity of transgender people in death.

Everyone deserves to have their identity respected in death, and this bill clarifies what, currently, can be a confusing process to ensure that transgender people get the same respect as all other Rhode Islanders. There is currently no guidance given to funeral directors on this

issue in Rhode Island. As result, it sometimes happens that death certificates mistakenly reflect sex assigned at birth as opposed to the decedent's lived gender identity. This bill provides clarity to funeral home directors that the gender identity recorded on the death certificate is reported either based on documentation memorializing gender transition if available, or by information provided by those most familiar with the decedent's gender identity at the time of death. Providing clear statutory guidance on how to record information on a death certificate is helpful for all involved and helps to ensure an efficient, respectful and uniform system. Experiencing the death of a loved one is a time of intense grief and vulnerability, and clear guideposts will help friends and families move through challenging times.

Through this bill, Rhode Island can continue to lead on transgender inclusion and respect, in New England and nationally. Two other states, California and the District of Columbia, have passed similar protections. Cal. Health & Safety Code § 102875; D.C. Code § 7-211(a). By taking this straightforward and common-sense step to update Rhode Island General Laws §23-3-16, Rhode Island would take the lead in New England to protect the dignity of transgender people in death and to provide necessary clarity to funeral home directors. GLAD strongly supports S. 2614. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony, and please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or for additional information.

Respectfully submitted,



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