



AMERICAN ATHEISTS

February 20, 2026

The Honorable Rep. Bob Lynn
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
107 North Main Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: OPPOSE HB 1564, Revoking the Promise of Equal Treatment Under the Law

Dear Chairperson Lynn and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

American Atheists, on behalf of its constituents in New Hampshire, writes in opposition to HB 1564, a bill that would systematically eliminate gender identity as a protected class across New Hampshire's civil rights statutes, dismantling legal protections that New Hampshire residents have relied upon for protection from discrimination. This legislation would strip away necessary safeguards in employment, housing, public accommodations, health care, public education, foster care, hate crime reporting, and criminal sentencing, leaving transgender and gender nonconforming residents without legal recourse in virtually every aspect of public life. The complete removal of these provisions constitutes an affirmative legislative endorsement of discriminatory behavior against some of New Hampshire's most vulnerable residents. We strongly urge you to preserve the state's civil rights framework by rejecting this bill.

American Atheists is a national civil rights organization that works to achieve religious equality for all Americans by protecting what Thomas Jefferson called the "wall of separation" between government and religion created by the First Amendment. We strive to create an environment where atheists are accepted as members of our nation's communities and where bigotry against our community is seen as abhorrent and unacceptable. We promote understanding of atheists through education, outreach, and community-building, and work to end the stigma associated with being an atheist in America. As advocates for the civil rights of all Americans, American Atheists believes each individual should receive equal protection under the law regardless of their background.

State-level civil rights statutes operate as the primary legal mechanism through which residents can seek recourse for discrimination. While federal law provides a baseline of protection, state law most directly impacts the way individuals, employers, landlords, health care providers, and public institutions operate. Explicitly including protected classes

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in state-level civil rights statutes is one of the most fundamental ways a state can ensure its citizens all benefit from the guiding principle that every person is equal under the law and all should be afforded the benefit of the law. By so doing, the state ensures that a worker fired due to a protected characteristic can file a complaint with the human rights commission, that a family denied housing has access to vital legal remedies, and that a patient who was refused treatment by a health care provider because they belong to a protected class has the ability to hold that provider accountable. When civil rights statutes fail to unequivocally protect certain characteristics, the people belonging to those groups are rendered invisible in the eyes of the law and forced to endure discrimination with no avenue to justice.

HB 1564 seeks to erase an entire protected class in New Hampshire, an action that is nearly unprecedented in American history. Until recently, no state had ever contemplated affirmatively revoking the protections afforded by nondiscrimination statutes by wholly eliminating a protected class. This is an attack both on New Hampshire residents and the integrity of civil rights law. Stripping protections away from a class of people the state once protected sends an unmistakable signal that the state sanctions discrimination against these people as a matter of public policy. Such a repudiation of the foundational principle of civil rights law, that all are guaranteed the equal protection of the law, would revoke the state's promise to ensure all New Hampshire residents are protected from bad actors and open the door to further escalation. If gender identity can be legislatively erased from the state's nondiscrimination statutes, then the precedent is set for other protected classes — including age, sex, race, religion, disability, and marital status — to be similarly eliminated. The destruction of one protected class now allows for the destruction of others in the future.

The consequences of HB 1564 on transgender and gender nonconforming New Hampshire citizens would be felt immediately. This legislation would withdraw essential legal protections that impact virtually every aspect of an individual's life seemingly overnight. A transgender resident could be fired from their job, evicted from their home, refused service at a restaurant, or denied medical treatment solely because of their gender identity, with no option for recourse. Transgender youth in foster care would lose the right to demand equal treatment regardless of their gender identity by the very system entrusted to ensure their welfare. An entire segment of hate crimes would no longer be captured in the state's crime reporting system, depriving lawmakers and law enforcement officials of the data required to identify patterns of targeted violence and make informed decisions about how best to allocate resources in order to protect vulnerable communities. Worse still, HB 1564 would strip gender identity from New Hampshire's prohibition on conversion therapy, weakening protections for young people throughout the state that were enacted less than a decade ago and sanctioning psychological harm against minors simply because of their

gender identity. In short, the cumulative effect of this bill would amount to the comprehensive legal abandonment of a vulnerable population.

If enacted, HB 1564 would be a deliberate and comprehensive dismantling of civil rights protections New Hampshire residents have come to rely upon. This would be an extraordinary disavowal of the state's commitment to ensuring its residents are afforded equal protection under the law and would inflict tangible, lasting harm onto residents whose ability to secure housing, employment, health care, and basic dignity depends on the protections this bill would eliminate. We urge you to reject this bill and reaffirm New Hampshire's commitment to civil rights.

Should you have any questions regarding American Atheists' opposition to HB 1564, please contact me at vanderson@atheists.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victoria Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Victoria" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Anderson".

Victoria Anderson
State Policy Specialist
American Atheists