

2024 -- H 8327

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LC006158
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

HOUSE RESOLUTION

HONORING AND CELEBRATING JUNE OF 2024, AS "PRIDE MONTH" IN THE STATE
OF RHODE ISLAND

Introduced By: Representatives Vella-Wilkinson, Shekarchi, Blazejewski, Shanley,
Batista, Noret, Finkelman, Dawson, O'Brien, and Tanzi

Date Introduced: June 04, 2024

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, Rhode Island celebrates the LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
2 Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual +) community in June of 2023, by honoring the history,
3 struggles and successes of the LGBTQIA+ community and by supporting peace and prosperity
4 for all; and

5 WHEREAS, In 1949, the Rhode Island General Assembly established the State
6 Commission for Human Rights with the understanding that "[t]he practice or policy of
7 discrimination against individuals...is a matter of state concern", and that "discrimination foments
8 public strife and unrest, threatens the rights and privileges of the inhabitants of the state, and
9 undermines the foundations of a free democratic state" R.I.G.L. Section 28-5-2; and

10 WHEREAS, The Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights is one of the oldest state
11 agencies in the country that specializes in antidiscrimination law enforcement; and

12 WHEREAS, The Commission enforces all Rhode Island antidiscrimination laws in the
13 areas of employment, housing, public accommodations, credit and delivery of services; and

14 WHEREAS, Our federal government, through the Civil Rights Acts of 1968 and 1991,
15 identified only seven protected categories that are secured from discrimination, to include: race,
16 color, sex, disability, ancestral origin, religion and age; and

17 WHEREAS, Rhode Island State statutes prohibit discrimination based on race, color, sex
18 (including pregnancy and sexual harassment), disability, ancestral origin, religion, age, sexual
19 orientation, and gender identity/expression; and

1 WHEREAS, Rhode Island has outlawed discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation
2 since 1995, and on the basis of gender identity or expression since 2001 in employment, credit,
3 housing and public accommodations; and

4 WHEREAS, Lesbian and gay Rhode Islanders organized their first PrideFest in 1976
5 with approximately 75 people in attendance. Called the "76ers", these individuals marched
6 through downtown Providence despite State and City leaders attempting to block the parade.
7 They sought to celebrate their diversity, and to highlight the contributions they had made to the
8 wider community; and

9 WHEREAS, On June 25, 1978, Gilbert Baker, an Army veteran from Kansas, designed
10 the rainbow flag as a symbol for the gay liberation movement, which flies during the annual
11 Rhode Island Pride Parade. Each color of the flag has a meaning: hot pink for sexuality, red for
12 life, orange for healing, yellow for the sun, green for nature, turquoise blue for art, indigo for
13 harmony, and violet for spirit; and

14 WHEREAS, "Don't ask, don't tell" was the official United States policy on military
15 service of non-heterosexual people, instituted during the Clinton administration. The policy was
16 in effect from February 28, 1994, until September 20, 2011; and

17 WHEREAS, Between World War II and the repeal of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy in
18 2011, an estimated 100,000 service members were less-than-honorably discharged due to their
19 sexual orientation. While this ill-conceived policy — which forced gay service members to keep
20 their sexual orientation hidden — was repealed in 2011, no countermeasure was created to amend
21 the discharge status for those who received less than an "honorable" characterization due to their
22 sexuality. In 2018, Rhode Island's General Assembly passed a "Restore the Honor Bill" which
23 helped gay and transgender veterans receive their State and local benefits; and

24 WHEREAS, On November 20, 1999, Gwendolyn Ann Smith, a well-known advocate for
25 trans rights, created the first Transgender Day of Remembrance, commemorating all the trans
26 people who were killed by anti-transgender violence and bigotry; and

27 WHEREAS, The Netherlands became the first country to legalize same-sex marriage in
28 2001. Massachusetts became the first state to legalize same-sex marriage following a ruling by
29 the State's highest court in 2003. Rhode Island legalized same-sex marriage on August 1, 2013. In
30 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled all state bans on same-sex marriage unconstitutional,
31 allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry nationwide; and

32 WHEREAS, After dramatically boosting the attendance and community involvement in
33 gay pride, in 2018, PrideFest led to Providence being listed as one of the "World's Best
34 Destinations for LGBT Pride Celebrations" by National Geographic; and

1 WHEREAS, While COVID-19 cancelled most public gatherings, in June of 2020,
2 hundreds of people marched through the City of Providence in support of gay and transgender
3 people of color. The event "Resistance and Resilience Rally: Trans Black Lives Matter" was
4 organized by Rhode Island Pride; now, therefore be it

5 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby
6 celebrates June of 2024, as "Pride Month" and embraces the LGBTQIA+ community with
7 appreciation for their culture, creativity and contributions; and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That this House will hereby continue to respect ALL our residents and
9 work to ensure equity and justice as a hallmark of Rhode Island legislation; and be it further

10 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
11 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Rhode Island Pride.

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