

KARIN POWER
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 41
MULTNOMAH AND CLACKAMAS COUNTIES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Chair Williamson, Vice Chair Gorsek, Vice Chair Sprenger, members of the committee,

My name is Karin Power, and I have the honor of representing House District 41. As a member of and advocate for the LGBTQIA+ community, I am pleased to bring you HB 2589 for your consideration today.

The way that Oregon statute currently reads, it conflates sexual orientation and transgender with mental or physical impairments. In one section covering what constitutes a disability, the word 'transvestite' is placed on the same line in state law as pedophilia. We know this is incredibly offensive to the transgender community, and those who practice in this area of law and see it periodically in their profession. HB 2589 aims to remove this offensive and outdated language from ORS 659A.118 and ORS 659A.130, because when language like this remains in state statutes, it runs contrary to the work we are doing to better learn from and understand difference, and provide a welcoming Capitol environment. Moreover, the misappropriation of the definitions of disability are not only inaccurate and deeply misguided, but also take away agency from those who are differently-abled and those who live with disabilities. By changing the language we use, we can send a clear message to Oregonians about the value we place in cultivating an inclusive, respectful state.

HB 2589 is a priority for me because I strive to center the progress of LGBTQIA+ communities and to ensure equal and equitable opportunity. Words matter, and as our understanding and cultural context evolves, so does our language. In recent years, our colleagues have worked to do statutory cleanup, including an effort last year to address racial covenants still in property deeds. I hope to continue this work to address the harmful, problematic language that will remain in state law unless we take action. The revision of this statutory language is a meaningful step in the right direction of validating the marginalized identities of LGBTQIA+ and disabled communities. By removing this transphobic language from our statute, we are showing our communities that we see them and are working for them.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

