

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sarah Rohrs. I live in Salem. My pronouns are she and her. I am writing to show my strong support for SB 704. This bill would outlaw the so-called "LGBTQ panic defense" which, unbelievably, allows a jury to find that a victim's gender identity is to blame for a perpetrator's violent reaction, including murder. This is vile and reprehensible. It is beyond inappropriate that this law is on the books and this kind of defense is even allowed. It sickens me to think that a perpetrator could be excused of a crime by claiming that someone's sexual identity made him or her lose control, even commit murder. This defense implies that LGBTQ+ people are not deserving of justice or basic assumptions of personhood and dignity, and that their lives are worth less than others. This defense sends a message that transgender people are harming others by their very existence. We must rid our books of this vile law and defense and send a message that the lives of LGBTQ+ Oregonians are of value, that they matter as much as others, and that they are deserving of equal protection under the law.

Please pass this bill.