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OF GREATER PORTLAND



Sarah Rohr, Youth and Families Engagement Associate, speaking as a Representative of the Jewish Community Relations Council on behalf of The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, we represent about 38,000 people.

Thank you, for the full package of Reproductive Rights and Gender Affirming Care that are laid out in HB 2002.

Our community values and protects the rights of all people.

Women's rights are human rights, Transgender rights are human rights, Children's rights are human rights.

Our liturgy guides us to honor the stranger, protect the widow and care for those without access to helpful resources.

The Torah where all Judeo-Christian tradition stems from is clear that we (humanity) are all connected and interdependent.

Part of recognizing interdependence is honoring individual choice and personal sovereignty.

HB 2002 Honors the sovereignty of women and Transgender folks seeking necessary medical care.

When those rights are available people thrive!

As an educator, I often hear adults speaking on behalf of and for children- it's natural and understandable.

Over my decade and a half as an educator it has become clear to me that children know a lot more about themselves and the world around them than many well meaning adults give them credit for.

When I was in my second year of teaching kindergarten, one child in particular changed my meta-cognitive (thinking about thinking) perspective about the innate intelligence of

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children... I put forth a scenario where any wish the kids had would be granted, with the caveat, that they couldn't ask for the popular toys of the day or bikes. One tiny 5 year old hand shot up.

A small voice said "I wish everyone, everywhere could have everything they need." The child's mom and dad were very surprised by this response when I shared out after class.

It is one of many stories that have shattered my antiquated perception of children.

I think of child development on a continuum of arrival. Some kids are fully who they are, some are arriving, some are waiting to arrive.

I have known many 6 & 7 year olds who knew they are gay and lesbian at those ages. Unprompted by undue influence.

We must listen closely to the children who know themselves deeply, just as adults who know themselves deeply need and want to be listened to.

Mental Health protections for our Transgender Youth, teens, adults and elders should also be in this bill because our world is not always a kind or welcoming place for their radical honesty and evolved understanding of identity.

You have our full support as you bring this bill through its next stages of development and for a vote. We thank you in advance for listening deeply to all of the passionate voices on these issues.

These issues require nuanced rather than black and white thinking. We trust in your capacities as civilization builders to guide this process in an ethical and equitable manner.

When we end a book of Torah to move onto the next book we say to each other- Chazak, Chazak, V'nithazek- Strength, Strength, may you be strengthened!

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