

KARIN POWER
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 41
MULTNOMAH AND CLACKAMAS COUNTIES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, members of the committee:

My name is Karin Power, and I have the honor of representing House District 41. As an Oregonian, I am pleased to bring SB 577 for your consideration today; however, I am also here today to speak about the importance of this bill as a member of and advocate for the LGBT community.

According to Gallup data from 2015, 5.4% of Portland's population identifies as LGBT, which is the second highest rate in the nation.¹ Frequently, Portland is described as one of the most LGBT friendly cities in the nation but unacceptably, there is a disconnect between this reputation and reality. In the spring of 2018, Gigi Pierce, a transgender woman, was murdered in Portland; and also last year, another man was charged with assault and intimidation after attacking a transgender woman.² After attending 2018 Pride, two siblings were allegedly attacked in NW Portland; the man was charged with a hate crime after punching the brother and yelling homophobic slurs.³ To be clear, this is only a small sampling of the bias crimes in Oregon.

We must face the truth that for too many of our citizens, Oregon is an unwelcoming, dangerous place. For them, the FBI stat that the number of hate crimes in Oregon increased over 60% from 2015-16, matches up with their lived, personal experiences. The prevalence of hate crimes means that for marginalized individuals, each aspect of their daily lives is dictated by the reality that they could be targeted because of their identity: which neighborhood they call home, what mode of transportation they choose, what events they attend, etc. These calculations along with the ever-present safety threat are significant, unacceptable burdens that have a mental, physical, emotional, and economic toll.

I have talked about the LGBT experience in Oregon today, but we know many communities in this state experience hate crime and bias, and an intersectional approach to understanding the impact of this issue is critical. We are at a crossroads in this state, and our actions here will determine the current and future makeup of Oregon. We cannot continue on the same path where we use the rhetoric of inclusivity but fail to back it up with action and legislation. SB 577 allows us to move down a new path and begin combatting the prevalence of hate crimes through a multi-pronged approach. I know for many people, the Capitol feels far away, but I hope that this legislation sends a message to marginalized people throughout Oregon that we hear you, we care about you, and change is coming.

Thank you for your consideration today.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/21/upshot/the-metro-areas-with-the-largest-and-smallest-gay-population.html>

² <https://www.portlandmercury.com/blogtown/2018/05/22/20024969/police-identify-murder-victim-as-transgender-woman;>
<https://www.oregonlive.com/portland/2018/07/man-arrested-accused-of-lgbt-h.html>

³ <https://www.kgw.com/article/news/local/brother-sister-attacked-after-portland-pride-festival-suspect-charged-with-hate-crime/283-565526743>

