

WASHINGTON STATE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington State Human Rights Commission Statement Regarding Seattle Locker Room Incident

When a man recently entered a women's locker room at a Seattle pool, his intent was obviously to make the women and girls in the restroom upset and uncomfortable, and to make some kind of misguided point about the Human Rights Commission's rules regarding equal access to gender-segregated facilities. His behavior is inexcusable and reprehensible. And it is absolutely not protected under the law. According to witnesses, the man never identified himself as transgender. He did not express a female gender identity through voice, dress, or mannerisms. He was a man, but in the wrong place. And even worse, when he was asked to leave, he refused to do so.

Men *cannot* go into the women's locker room, as this man claimed he had the right to do. Only women, including transgender women, can go into the women's locker room. Persons who enter the wrong gender-segregated facility for nefarious purposes can be asked to leave in no uncertain terms. And they would have no recourse.

If a business has a reasonable belief that a person is in the wrong place, there is no rule that states that the person cannot be questioned and required to leave. If that person has entered a gender-segregated facility under false pretenses, and is asked to leave, then it is quite unlikely that the person will pursue a civil rights complaint. If they do, the subsequent investigation will uncover that the person is not protected under the law, and the complaint will be closed with no further action. If a business makes an honest mistake, and requires a protected person to leave a facility, and the wronged person files a civil rights complaint, the Human Rights Commission will look upon this as an opportunity for education, not for punitive action. The Human Rights Commission cannot impose fines, cannot throw anybody in jail, and will not seek an outcome disproportionate to the action; rather it will seek a mutual resolution among the parties.

We all have a lot to learn about people who are different from ourselves, and can all work harder at practicing tolerance and acceptance. Working together toward these goals, we can make this a Washington that stands up for equal rights for all of its citizens.