

## CONTACT

Shawn Reagor, [shawn@mhrn.org](mailto:shawn@mhrn.org)

Cherilyn DeVries, [cherilyn@mhrn.org](mailto:cherilyn@mhrn.org)

# Montana Free and Fair Coalition Condemns “Freedom Caucus” Malicious Attack on Rep. Zephyr

*Underhanded call for “civility” intentionally and repeatedly misgendered  
Montana’s first transgender state representative*

**Helena** – The Free & Fair Coalition strongly condemns the [hostile statement](#) made by the “Freedom Caucus” on April 18 to censure Representative Zooey Zephyr (D-Missoula) for her salient and appropriate floor statements intended to hold SB 99 supporters accountable for the harm that this bill will cause youth across Montana.

In a statement released on Twitter, the “Freedom Caucus”, a group of Montana’s most conservative and extremist legislators, repeatedly misgendered Rep. Zephyr, while demanding her censure. The letter also contained false and misleading statements regarding Rep. Zephyr’s statements, further evidencing the discrimination and aggression that transgender, nonbinary, Two Spirit, and intersex people have faced during the 2023 Legislative Session. The intentional, public disrespect of Rep. Zephyr’s identity is not only cruel, but also discourages other transgender Montanans from engaging in our political processes, including seeking political office.

The statement is replete with misinformation regarding the discussion of SB 99 on the House floor on April 18. It repeats misleading and inaccurate information regarding healthcare for transgender individuals, which has been repeatedly refuted by local physicians and national medical professional organizations. While Rep. Zephyr’s statements were intended to emphasize the direness that SB 99 will cause for innumerable youth in Montana, much of the anti-transgender comments from legislators during hearings and floor discussions, by contrast, have been gratuitously dehumanizing and purposefully harmful.

It is clear that anti-LGBTQ2S+ rhetoric amplified by the “Freedom Caucus” is harming Montanans. LGBTQ2S+ organizations are reporting an increase in crisis calls from LGBTQ2S+ community members and reports of anti-LGBTQ2S+ slurs and physical assaults. Recently, an emergency room physician sent a [letter](#) to every legislator stating that a teen receiving emergency care for mental health distress told providers that they were in crisis because, “[m]y state doesn’t want me.”

The “Freedom Caucus” attempt to falsely accuse Rep. Zephyr of “hate” for openly objecting to SB 99 and the precise suffering it will cause is a crude attempt to shut down honest discussions about the impact and intent of this bill and sets a dangerous precedent. Their ongoing support of bills that attack LGBTQ2S+ rights, amplify degrading commentary, and ignore medical expertise is proof that they are not genuinely interested in having constructive, civil, fact-based discussions with transgender, nonbinary,

Two Spirit, and intersex people, who have repeatedly told legislators that they want the freedom to live their lives without government interference.

Basic human rights like privacy and freedom of speech are not up for debate. If the “Freedom Caucus” wants to live up to its name, then it should stop misleading the public and support every Montanan’s right to freely live their authentic lives.

The Free and Fair Coalition is a network of organizations and individuals united to protect LGBTQ+ Montanans and their essential rights.

ACLU of Montana  
Bridgercare  
Blue Mountain Clinic  
EmpowerMT  
Forward Montana  
Montana Human Rights Network  
Montana Women Vote  
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Montana  
TransVisible Montana  
Western Montana LGBTQ+ Community Center