

**From:** dahuds@optonline.net  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 8, 2023 3:06 PM  
**To:** boardofselectmen  
**Cc:** Rochester, Jacqueline  
**Subject:** My Written Public Comment on the Wisdom of Having a Wilton Pride Proclamation

Dear Members of the Board of Selectmen,

This is my written public comment for your meeting on January 9<sup>th</sup> on the matter of having a Wilton Pride Proclamation and largely tracks my *Wilton Bulletin* column of October 6<sup>th</sup>:

Discussions surrounding whether our town should issue a Pride Proclamation specifically affirming our support as a community for our LGBTQ+ members, present and future, have focused especially on whether our town's existing proclamation welcoming diversity sufficiently addresses the issue. That proclamation reads as follows:

“The selectmen of Wilton, CT do hereby affirm our town commitment to strive for civility, respect and understanding and to value the diversity of those who live and work and visit Wilton, without regard to gender, religion, sexual orientation, race, national origin, ethnicity, disability, political views, or social or economic status.”

That's quite a comprehensive statement. But is more needed? Perhaps that proclamation would be enough if we weren't seeing efforts in other states, backed by legislatures, governors, school boards and even library boards, to remove reference to gays under penalty of law. For example, recent Florida legislation called by some the “Don't Say Gay” laws are said by the Associated Press to be causing educators to remove family pictures from their desks in the exercise of an abundance of caution. Texas has also been very active on this front, and recent reports even include stories of library boards voting to remove books from their collections.

We've also seen that when the most aggressive of these states act, other states follow suit where legislative and executive composition enable them to do so. There then tends to be a “race to the bottom” of efforts based on adding further restrictions and generally letting it be known that residents of their state who are LGBTQ+ are second-class citizens. The irony is that some who are most vocal on the importance of First Amendment rights, including especially freedom of speech, are also the most vocal in support of these actions.

Is the sense in Wilton that we agree or disagree with what is being done in these other states? Our town's broad existing proclamation on civility, respect and understanding and the many “Wilton Pride” rainbow-flag lawn signs around town certainly indicate that we forcefully disagree with any attempts to make LGBTQ+ members of our community second-class citizens. What more should those of us who don't agree with those attempts do? Isn't it time for us collectively to have a proclamation that centers specifically on this subject given how it is being treated elsewhere in our nation?

We teach in our schools and faith institutions the importance of being “upstanders,” not just bystanders who observe conduct we know to be wrong yet do nothing to address it. By contrast, an upstander finds ways  
ent forms, but all require action. These forms include  
speaking up when a comment is made within one's hearing that is disrespectful of another person. That  
speaking-up can be addressed to the maker of the statement underscoring its wrongness. It also,  
and equally  
importantly, can be addressed to the target of the statement explicitly acknowledging that  
person's personhood and worth. History has taught us how collective bystanding can be a

powerful accelerator of wrongful conduct. None of us needs to have major historical examples listed to be reminded of how destructive bystanding can be.

One can certainly assert that the existing proclamation shows that we as a community are not bystanders. But actions expressed in laudably broad terms a half-dozen years ago may well not be sufficient to take us out right now of the collective role of bystanders. Moreover, if we've already proclaimed our support for, and welcome of, diversity in our community in those broad terms, what's wrong with redeclaring it in the specifics that current actions elsewhere are bringing prominently to the fore? Such a proclamation need not be long to make its point, something like: "Our town celebrates its diversity and is committed to respecting, supporting and welcoming those Wilton residents within the LGBTQ+ community."

So I strongly urge you to adopt a proclamation specifically in support of the LGBTQ+ members of our community, current and future, and to do so now. An observer of wrongful acts who fails to respond risks becoming a bystander no matter how virtuous his or her intentions to be an upstander may otherwise be.

Best regards, Steve Hudspeth

6 Glen Hill Road, Wilton

**From:** OLGA ZARGOS <zargos@sbcglobal.net>

**Date:** January 5, 2023 at 5:39:53 PM EST

**To:** boardofselectmen <boardofselectmen@wiltonct.org>

**Cc:** wiltonpride@gmail.com

**Subject: Wilton Pride Specific Proclamation Discussion & Board of Selectmen/Selectperson  
Agenda Item for 1/9/23 Meeting**

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Dear Board of Selectmen/Selectpersons,

Happy New Year. We hope you are all healthy and have been able to enjoy some quality time with your families over the last few weeks. On behalf of Wilton Pride, we also wanted to thank you for your discussion in June of 2022 about the Wilton Pride specific proclamation requested and the discussion about revisiting the possibility of addressing and/or amending the 2017 Proclamation on Civility, Respect and Understanding. At the June 2022 meeting as time was limited and further discussion was necessary, there was a request that the Board of Selectmen/Selectpersons table the issue until the January 2023 meeting. As the Board of Selectmen/Selectpersons' meeting is scheduled for January 9, 2023, we hope the Wilton Pride Specific Proclamation and discussion will be on the agenda for further discussion. We understand that you are heading into a very busy budget season and there are many pressing items to discuss. However, we just want to emphasize that this is also an important issue for our Wilton Community and want to ensure that it does not get lost in the process. We are available to work collaboratively with you to discuss this matter in further detail.

Thank you for your courtesy and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Olga Zargos-Traub

Wilton Resident & Ally of Wilton Pride

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**From:** Pamela Hovland <pamela@pamelahovlanddesign.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, January 7, 2023 3:05 PM  
**To:** boardofselectmen  
**Subject:** Proclamation

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Board of Selectmen / women;

In 2017 I initiated the 'Proclamation of Civility, Respect and Understanding' which was adopted by our Town. I applaud the leaders of Wilton for working with me and others to make an important statement for our community. We all agreed that words matter.

Afterward, I heard from many friends and neighbors (and strangers) that the proclamation was much needed and much appreciated during a difficult period in our country.

Then, as now, the proclamation was meant to be both inclusive of, and relevant to, ALL residents of Wilton as well as everyone who works here, whether that work is for a private company, a corporation or a Town municipal department.

The group of concerned Wiltonians called 'Wilton Pride' have requested that an additional (and more focused) annual statement of support for the LGBTQ community be made public by the Town. This simple request seems like a logical extension of the 2017 proclamation. Why wouldn't our Town participate in such an act of support, knowing that this gesture could very well impact the sense of acceptance and belonging for even one Wilton youth who identifies as LGBTQ?

Please support Wilton Pride's proposal. It takes very little to make this happen. Most importantly, it is the right thing to do.

As our existing proclamation states, **our commitment to inclusion of all citizens informs our values and enriches our community.**

Onward.

Pamela Hovland

++++  
++++

Pamela Hovland

Principal  
Pamela Hovland Design LLC

148 Danbury Road  
Wilton CT 06897

203.451.2266

Senior Critic in Design Yale  
University

Founder  
Class Action Collective



## **Wilton Pride**

Farah Masani

512-431-1515

Nicole Wilson-Spiro

[wiltonpride@gmail.com](mailto:wiltonpride@gmail.com)

January 7, 2022

Board of Selectpeople

Town of Wilton:

As more and more towns in Fairfield County actively show their support for the LGBTQ+ community through official proclamations, Wilton Pride once again requests that the Wilton Board of Selectmen offer a Pride Proclamation annually during Pride Month.

Wilton Pride understands the criterion for offering a town proclamation - that the topic directly relates to the work of town municipal departments - and we believe that supporting the LGBTQ+ community meets this standard.

According to America's Pride Proclamation from 2022, "A Proclamation on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, And Intersex Pride Month," 45% of American LGBTQ+ youth have seriously contemplated suicide in the last year.<sup>1</sup> While this statistic is terrifying, we also know from the Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health found that "LGBTQ+ youth who lived in an accepting community, had access to LGBTQ-affirming spaces, and/or felt high social support from family and friends reported significantly lower rates of attempting suicide in the past year."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, Wilton has a responsibility to take decisive action to support the mental health of our LGBTQ+ youth.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/05/31/a-proclamation-on-lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-queer-and-intersex-pride-month-2022/#:~:text=BIDEN%20JR.%2C%20President%20of%20the,Queer%2C%20and%20Intersex%20Pride%20Month>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022/#support-youth>

In Wilton, the mental health struggles for LGBTQ+ residents directly engage Wilton Police, EMS and Social Services. This use of services mirrors those for domestic violence, drug abuse, sexual assault and gun violence, four of the five current annual proclamations in Wilton. Wilton Pride argues that generic inclusion in the Civility, Respect and Understanding Proclamation insufficiently addresses such an important issue and that a specific Pride Proclamation properly demonstrates our town's commitment to respecting, supporting and welcoming those Wilton residents within the LGBTQ+ community.

Wilton's leadership can look to our neighboring cities and towns for inspiration about how best to celebrate and support the LGBTQ+ community and the profound impact on the whole community:

**RIDGEFIELD:** Rudy Marconi, Ridgefield's First Selectman, said, "By displaying the Pride Progress flag at Ridgefield Town Hall during Pride Month, Ridgefield celebrates the LGBTQIA+ members of our community and shows solidarity with ongoing struggles for human rights and human dignity."<sup>3</sup>

**WESTPORT:** Jennifer Tooker, First Selectwoman of Westport, issued a proclamation saying, "Everyone — no matter who you are or who you love — has a place in Westport."<sup>4</sup>

**EASTON:** First Selectman Dr. David Bindelglass said at Easton's Pride flag raising in 2020, "It is important that we celebrate our diversity in this town and our understanding of each other as the individuals that we are regardless of our backgrounds. This flag belongs, here we belong here! We are all together in this and we are a wonderful community as such."<sup>5</sup>

**SHELTON:** Similarly, at Shelton's first flag raising and proclamation by Mayor Mark Lauretti in 2021, Jimmy Tickey, a member of the LGBTQ+ community, said, "Some may wonder, why do we need pride? Because for too many for too long they live in the shadows. And because there's a young person wondering if it gets better, and it does. Being you, all of you, is a beautiful thing everyone should feel."<sup>6</sup>

Please consider offering an annual Pride Proclamation starting in June 2023 to state clearly that Wilton is a welcoming and supportive space to members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Thank you,  
Wilton Pride

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<sup>3</sup> <https://news.hamlethub.com/ridgefield/events/72599-ridgefield-s-inaugural-pride-flag-raising-ceremony>

<sup>4</sup> <https://westportjournal.com/community/out-proud-community-inclusivity-celebrated-by-westport-pride/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://patch.com/connecticut/weston-ct/pride-flag-all-weekend-easton>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.sheltonherald.com/news/article/We-made-history-Shelton-raises-pride-flag-16254884.php>

**From:** Farah Masani <farahmasani@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Saturday, January 7, 2023 12:37 PM

**To:** boardofselectmen; Wilton Pride; Nicole Wilson-Spiro

**CAUTION:** This email came from outside the Town network. Is it authentic? Don't click until you are sure.

**Subject:** Wilton Pride Proclamation

Good Morning -

Hope all is well.

Please find the attached request for a Wilton Pride Proclamation.

thanks

Farah

P.S.for a faster response text me (512)431-1515

**From:** Ryan Thompson <ryanvthompson@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Saturday, January 7, 2023 1:47 PM

**To:** boardofselectmen

**Cc:** Kate Thompson

**Subject:** Please Proclaim Wilton has Pride in 2023!!

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Please see attached and please affirmatively consider the human rights and emotional needs of every current and future Wilton resident, today.

Ryan V. Thompson m:

215.990.1442

s: ryanvthompson



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**From:** Pnimonic <pnimonic@gmail.com> **Sent:**  
Saturday, January 7, 2023 6:55 PM **To:**  
boardofselectmen  
**Subject:** Wilton pride

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Hi,

I'm a resident of Wilton and I would like to email in support of Wilton Pride! Thanks,  
Monica Pani

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**From:** Amy Kesselman <amybethkess@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Sunday, January 8, 2023 5:59 PM

**To:** boardofselectmen

**Subject:** Wilton Pride

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As a 14 year resident of Wilton and the parent of a gay child who graduated from WHS, I am very pleased that Wilton Pride has been formed.

I am also very much in favor of a Pride Proclamation for the town.

Thank you.

Amy Kesselman  
amybethkess@gmail.com 203-247-  
7010

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**From:** Michael Lennon <mtlennon84@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Saturday, January 7, 2023 1:40 PM

**To:** boardofselectmen

**Subject:** Wilton statement

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To whom,

Please see attached letter. I have made Wilton my home thanks to the care and outreach of its residents. I wish for the city of Wilton to state plainly that LGBTQ+ are welcomed without reservation.

Michael Lennon

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**From:** Sharon Elias <sharonelias@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Saturday, January 7, 2023 9:58 PM

**To:** boardofselectmen

**Subject:** Wilton Pride

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[https://cdn.fsbx.com/v/t59.2708-21/312323359\\_3631815740408067\\_9031903799805053991\\_n.pdf/Pride-Proclamation-Request-to-BOS.pdf?\\_nc\\_cat=104&ccb=1-7&\\_nc\\_sid=0cab14&\\_nc\\_ohc=d7DwIDfDzMAX\\_HR-NF&\\_nc\\_ht=cdn.fsbx.com&oh=03\\_AdROInm2GQ9gUHolsOuRjtdrKT6\\_EJYKaByanenG\\_VusyA&oe=63BBC510&dl=1](https://cdn.fsbx.com/v/t59.2708-21/312323359_3631815740408067_9031903799805053991_n.pdf/Pride-Proclamation-Request-to-BOS.pdf?_nc_cat=104&ccb=1-7&_nc_sid=0cab14&_nc_ohc=d7DwIDfDzMAX_HR-NF&_nc_ht=cdn.fsbx.com&oh=03_AdROInm2GQ9gUHolsOuRjtdrKT6_EJYKaByanenG_VusyA&oe=63BBC510&dl=1)

Sent from my iPhone

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**From:** Sandi Cassidy <sandibubbles07@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Saturday, January 7, 2023 12:59 PM

**To:** boardofselectmen

**Subject:** Pride Proclamation

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Sent from my iPhone

Please excuse Typos and Auto Correct 🙄

**From:** Melissa Dailey <[melissadailey49@gmail.com](mailto:melissadailey49@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** January 9, 2023 at 10:40:12 AM EST  
**To:** boardofselectmen <[boardofselectmen@wiltonct.org](mailto:boardofselectmen@wiltonct.org)>  
**Subject:** Proclomations

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Board of Selectpeople

Town of Wilton:

I grew up in Wilton. Now, I am raising my two children here. I am forwarding this letter from Wilton Pride to show my support of this effort. It is an issue close to my heart. Please take this seriously.

-Melissa Dailey

**From:** [jec8605@gmail.com](mailto:jec8605@gmail.com)

**Date:** January 9, 2023 at 12:24:55 PM EST

**To:** boardofselectmen <[boardofselectmen@wiltonct.org](mailto:boardofselectmen@wiltonct.org)>

**Subject:** Wilton Pride recognition

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Members of the Board of Selectman,

I am thrilled that there is a growing movement and newly established organization in Wilton to highlight and call attention to the issues that are so important to the LGBTQ+ community. While I understand that Wilton has the CPU proclamation, I strongly encourage and request that Wilton officials take it a step further and specifically call attention to the issues that LGBTQ+ residents confront and recognize the efforts to support this important part of our community. Town buildings could fly Pride flags, support Pride month efforts, issue a Pride-specific proclamation, and co-sponsor Pride and LGBTQ+-support events.

Our LGBTQ+ population, and especially our youth, would benefit from knowing that our town's municipality supports them. In addition, recognizing and supporting the LGBTQ+ community sends an inclusive message to our LGBTQ+ residents, LGBTQ+ allies, and all of our residents.

Thank you,

Julie Corbett

41 Quail Ridge Rd, Wilton, CT 06897