

Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Minority Member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, my name is Bonnie Malvestuto and I am testifying in support of House Bill 160.

I'm the mother of a 17-year-old transgender boy.

Some people don't understand what transgender is. It is when a person is born with the external anatomy of one sex, but their brain identifies as the opposite sex. This gives rise to a medical condition called gender dysphoria, which is when a person hates their body because it does not match with the brain.

Since my son (who was born with apparently female anatomy) was about 4 years old, I thought he was just a tomboy, always wanting to wear male clothing and play with stereotypically boy toys.

As he became a teenager, I noticed he had developed anxiety and depression. At the age of 15, he would just sit in his dark room all the time. I became very worried, so I took him in to see a psychologist and a psychiatrist. On our way to the psychologist, he turned to me and said, "Mom, I'm a guy." I did not expect this, but it all made sense. He is a very smart kid and he had done some research on his own to discover that he is transgender and that there are others out there just like him. We discussed this with the psychologist and have continued to see her. It has made a world of difference for my son.

He came out at school and legally changed his name and gender. He now has short hair and dresses as a male. He feels better about himself now, but he still has some anxiety and depression produced, in part, by waiting to have his top surgery done, which will finally let him be himself. This is in the very near future. My husband and I love our son very much and we support him. It hasn't been easy. It's been a tough battle that's included disputes over bathroom use and the long process tied to legally changing his name and gender on government documents.

I am willing to keep fighting for my son. And I think House Bill 160 needs to be passed. My son is a human being with rights just like everyone else. He should not be discriminated against in any way. I think there needs to be much more education about transgender people since many folks make fun of those who are different because they don't understand why they are different. It's time for everyone to come together and support one another. My son and others like him should not have to struggle to be their true selves. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression should be made illegal, just as discrimination on the basis of race, religion, and age is also illegal.

My son is very smart and brave and has big goals that I want to see him achieve.
Please, help level the playing field by passing HB160.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Bonnie Malvestuto