

Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Minority Member Clyde and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, my name is Curtiss Jarvis.

Today, we are here to discuss HB 160 and it goes without saying that this is something that has a major impact on my life and is very dear to my heart. My daughter Alecia is transgender and has been her entire life. Even when she “came out” to us she wasn’t really coming out about anything; she was born this way because you don’t control how you are born, where you are born and why you are born.

When you are lucky enough to have a child, you are entrusted with the great responsibility of making sure they are safe, happy, loved and most of all you show and guide them on how to fit into the world. No matter what you do or how hard you try, you have absolutely no idea where your child is going to fit in, what there wants and desires are going to be or what they will want to achieve. Ultimately you really have no idea the person they will grow up to be. But I do know that at a little over 14 years old, my daughter is the bravest person I know, and I mean that in the most sincere way possible. When she told us who she felt she was, we always joke that the first thing I really thought of was, “Well we were going to have to redo your closet that we just finished because I wasn’t quite sure how dresses were going to fit in there. We better get the Container Store to come back!”

However, her inner strength was really crystalized in my mind during one incident at the beginning of the 7th grade school year. I am waiting in the car, and out of the school bounds this wonderful ball of joy in a bright orange summer dress. I am sure some people would immediately say, “Why are you wearing that”? but that is not what popped in my head and not just because she is my daughter. What I thought was, “Look at the strength and courage of that then 12 1/2 year old, to dress how she wants, to be who she is, to not be ashamed or feel like she has to hide, to quite frankly be Alecia”. I literally don’t know if I have that strength or courage, but I know one thing; there are very few people that do.

One of the most recent events that I struggled with was a situation that occurred during the Alabama Senate race this last December. Now, this isn’t going to be a dissertation on morality, Roy Moore, or ultimately what happened. There was a farmer named James Mathis whose 22-year old daughter killed herself in 1995 because she didn’t want to be gay and had lived her entire life being told she was wrong or immoral. It took Mr. Mathis having his daughter literally be gone to realize that his own personal feelings were wrong and that he had made a terrible mistake. But, I am not here today to ridicule anyone’s beliefs, to attack the faith of those in this room and those that will be voting on this bill or to dredge up an ugly Senate race to score political points. I am bringing it up because I am James Mathis. My daughter came to me and said, “Dad, this is who I am” and I answered with nothing but unconditional love and support as I would hope any parents would respond.

I thank you for your time and consideration of HB 160 and hope that you pass it to show that in the end we are all just people trying to work together, solve problems and make things better for everyone. All that people want is to be treated equally with respect and dignity. There is no reason that someone should be fired from a job, excluded from a restaurant, or denied the same basic services as anyone else just because of who they love or if they just happened to be born in the wrong body.

Again, thank you for time and consideration,

Curtiss W. Jarvis

Father to Alecia Jarvis, the Bravest Girl in all the World