

December 6, 2017

Dear Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, ranking minority member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, My name is Katrina Callaghan and I am the extremely proud mother of two sons, one of whom is transgender. I was born and raised in Ohio. I am originally from the Trumbull County area and have lived in Franklin County since 2007. My entire family is from Ohio, as well as my spouse's family. Ohio is the "Heart of It All" when it comes to my family.

I am proud to be an Ohioan at my core, but I am more relieved to be living in Franklin County while raising a transgender child. Most parts of Franklin County feel inclusive and accepting, but unfortunately that cannot be said throughout the state of Ohio. I fully support the legislation HB 160. I long for a day where the amazing LGBTQ community and the people that I care about can continue to dream of a world where discrimination based on one single part of what makes them human does not ALWAYS feel like the focus. Shouldn't every human have the basic right to equal treatment in the eyes of the government? Can you imagine having to worry every single day if your LGBTQ child, friend, loved ones, etc. will be discriminated against just for being who they are?

I have heard so many stories from parents of transgender children that are absolutely appalling. A set of parents that are from Ohio just spent the past year in and out of court because the county they live in refused to let them legally change their transgender child's name. Their reason for this was that he was only six and "couldn't possibly understand his sexuality yet." The fact that many members of the judicial system here in Ohio do not understand that gender identity and sexual orientation are completely different is just one of the many things we're facing. This also plays out often in parental custody cases. In cases where one parent is supportive and affirming to a transgender child and the other parent is not, it is disturbing that a supportive parent could fear losing custody or even worse, the life of their child, just because the judicial system does not have the education needed to rule on cases involving transgender people. I have heard from many parents that fear that Child Protective Services will remove their child from their home and feel it is necessary to have a "safe folder" on them at all times.

I have also heard many stories of children that have to attend a charter school or be home schooled because the public school administration refuses to use a transgender child's preferred name and pronouns or they refuse to document bullying from other students because "if you weren't transgender then this wouldn't happen." Yes, a school's employee actually said this. I often hear that schools refuse to change the student's name in the computer system without a legal name change, but as you read above, having a legal name change isn't always an option either. Why should we even have to make that decision? If we felt confident that our schools would fully support our children when it comes to their gender identity, many parents wouldn't rush to have their

child's name legally changed. Although there are many supportive schools in Ohio that have made accommodations in their computer systems with no issue, there are just as many schools claiming that they are not able to make those accommodations. There is discrimination in Ohio happening to our kids EVERY SINGLE DAY. Doesn't the thought of an innocent child facing unwarranted discrimination for being who they are just make you want to cry? It sure does for me. And I have. Many times. We have been lucky to have support in our school district, but as parents of LGBTQ children, we all know that we can't fully relax because the fight is never over for us. There are many bumps on this path, but it would be amazing to have a law like HB 160 in place to allow us to feel like we can take a breath for once. Please consider this legislation.

Thank you for takin the time to read this and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions that I can answer.

Sincerely, from a very tired mother,

Katrina Callaghan