

Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Minority Member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee. My name is Shannon Scott-Miller. I am a resident of Lakewood, Ohio and parent of two children. I appear today to present testimony in support of House Bill 160.

My husband and I have two children who are the center of our world. June is a special month for us to celebrate them. Both of my children were born in June. Both were assigned male at birth. The first time I held them they were so little, so soft, so beautiful. It was hard not to notice how everything in the world around them was so big in comparison, and their vulnerability made me weep. I made a promise to both of them on the day they were born to love them unconditionally and TO PROTECT THEM.

The story of how we discovered the tone of our children's true gender identity was different than the biological sex assigned at birth was one of understanding and growth that would fill many, many pages. Although we did not understand enough at 18 months when he declared, "I'm a girl," that we should respect her and treat her as the girl she truly is, we did understand enough to know we had a difficult road ahead of us. I made the promise again to my children to love them unconditionally and TO PROTECT THEM.

In the beginning, it was easier to protect them. Our world was only people we knew. Any resistance with the choices in going outside gender norms was met with logic that was difficult to dispute. It expanded in preschool where a new group of people had ideas and questions about my child, who defied gender norms. To protect her, we chose a progressive preschool and chose our playdates around those who shared our support for our children. Our world was bigger, but it was still small. Our children were still loved unconditionally and we could still protect them.

Our world grew again in elementary school. And so did our child's need to express a gender identity beyond toys and costumes to everyday clothes and hair pieces. Our school went from 40 kids we knew intimately to 240 that we knew only peripherally. Our love never wavered. Our fears of being able to protect her grew. And in kindergarten, we experienced our first hostile parent and an ineffective school administration. Despite our unconditional love, our grip on protecting her began to slip at a frightful pace. She experienced months of anxiety, fear of going to school on a daily basis, nightmares, and, at a very young age, lost trust and faith in her world.

My child grew up at six years old. She told me, "There will always be people who hate me, without even knowing me." I cried for days at her loss of innocence and at the truth in her words. I cried for weeks at the reality that every one of those haters could hurt my child. I made my promise over and over again and although unconditional love has never been in question, it was hard for me to feel I could truly protect her.

The openness of many families raising transgender children through the news and social media has helped people gain information and some better understanding. It has also brought out hate and anger in those who choose to fear and hate. Our family struggles with fear. Laws continue to be made to marginalize the LGBTQ community. Violence and hate crimes continue. Daily, we see messages of hate and anger, threats to our daughter in many forms and it's hard not to feel helpless in protecting her.

The bill you are considering today would be one step further in protecting many, including our child. It would protect her from the type of intimidation she has already experienced. It would protect her right to get a job and buy a home, rights most of us have never questioned. It would ensure her fair and equal access to public accommodations.

As our children grow, our ability to protect them gets less and less. We rely more and more on those in our community and the goodness in people, even those we do not know. We contribute our work, our taxes, our leadership in civic, school and philanthropic institutions to this state. We are relying on you now, asking you please to help us protect our daughter. Please help us create a safe world, for both of our children.