

Testimony: Opposition for House Bill 454

Cass Steiner

11/14/2022

Chairperson Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Denson, and members of the House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee. Thank you so much for allowing us to testify here today.

(Kat) My name is Kat Steiner and my pronouns are she/her. I live in Fairfax, which is a conservative suburb of Cincinnati, with my daughter. Professionally, I'm a nonprofit executive. Personally, I am a dedicated biological mom of one transgender daughter, Cass Steiner, who is 15 years old and have two bonus children. My fiance is Tom Sauer and he supports this testimony.

I want to introduce you to my daughter, who uses she/her pronouns. She's a sophomore at Mariemont High School, where she participates in multiple clubs, the fall play, the spring musical, and ESports. Last year, she played on the men's Junior Varsity Soccer team, and she also plays for the club soccer team CincySC. She's musically inclined and plays guitar, ukulele, and the flute. She came out in April 2022.

(Cass) My mom and I are strongly opposed to House Bill 454, banning gender affirming healthcare for minors like myself.

I am your regular 15 year old girl. Making mistakes is my specialty, whether it's not closing the refrigerator door, or forgetting to do my homework. But apart from the regular stressors of being 15, I am also a transgender girl. Gender dysphoria has always consumed my life. "I wish I looked like that", "why do I feel different" are things I used to say to myself. In seventh grade, I wanted to take estrogen to make myself more feminine. How I didn't know that was me being transgender is beyond me, but regardless, I still wanted to look like a girl and do girl things like putting on makeup, wearing feminine clothes, and making my voice higher in pitch. Seeing all of the girls developing physically had made me envious, jealous of the fact that it was the opposite of what I looked like. I was uncomfortable. With my body, my mindset, and virtually everything encompassing my prior self.

How do I see me for me? Finding and accepting myself was hard, but I have so many people to thank. Before I had come out to the world, I was in a really dark place. My mental health was rapidly declining as I had submerged into the depths of hatred and self harm. My mother, Kat Steiner, who was incredibly concerned for the health of her son as she knew him, did everything in her power to make sure I was getting the care I needed. By the time I had come out to her, I had been on two antidepressants, a therapist, and multiple visits to the Cincinnati Children's Hospital. The support and coverage for my mental health is unparalleled to the care of my mom.

The first person who knew was my former girlfriend. Telling her was a complete shock as anyone would expect, but she handled it amazingly. She gave me the opportunity to truly be myself by calling me my preferred name and pronouns, and helped me find comfort and confidence in myself and I couldn't be more thankful. I also had the school counselor know. I had been introduced in the Pride Club as Cass by her. The pediatrician and therapist knew I was transgender before I came out to my mom. To sum this up, I had so many people who helped me find myself, and taught me to love myself as I am.

The passing of this bill would be a major setback for not only me, but thousands of other teens like me. I have a gender affirming care appointment scheduled for next month. Not being able to do what makes me myself for another 3-4 years would be devastating to me. By the time Bill 454 gets passed I would have to stop seeing my doctor and possibly taking medication that is critical to my health.

Imagine getting in the shower and looking down at the body—your body—that you wish was different. Seeing a body that you absolutely hate would be horrible for anyone, let alone a completely different gender with different genitalia, especially that of the opposite sex that you identify. With this bill, I wouldn't be able to appear as I want to appear to the public with a form that would greatly appeal to me. This would likely send me, and everyone else who is expecting treatment, into another deep depression.

(Kat) The 6 months before Cass came out as transgender was the scariest time in my life. She was crippled by panic attacks, depression, and severe anxiety. There was self-harm and suicidal ideation. All of the medication, knives, and dangerous objects had to be locked away in my home because I was afraid my child would kill herself.

My parenting has been scrutinized since Cassie has come out as trans, which is hard. I don't think HB 454 is about health care or my kid's well-being. Religion, God, and - most importantly - fear are at the root of this bill. Being trans is not a choice my daughter made or something that I did. This is exactly how my child was made and I believe this as a person of faith.

My daughter spent time writing this and is choosing to be vulnerable with each of you today. Respectfully, I ask you to consider our testimony and vote NO on this dangerous bill. Think of us before making this decision. Please understand how implementing HB 454 could have deadly implications for trans youth, like my own sweet child.

We will now be taking any questions you may have. Thank you.