

Connor Opposition Testimony to HB6.2023

The Rev. Alice Connor

I am The Rev. Alice Connor, evangelical pastor and mother of a trans child who came out a year ago at 13. I am here representing both myself and the Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of Southern Ohio.

I have been ordained almost 20 years in the Episcopal Church and have been working as a campus minister for the Evangelical Lutheran Church at UC for most of that time. I have a masters degree in theology. I have had hundreds of LGBTQ students in my life, many of whom are trans. I have lived this in a way that I doubt any of you have. House Bill 6 uses some of the most vulnerable children as scapegoats to increase the political power of some members of your assembly, and it masquerades as a great moral victory, but only serves to show its authors' ignorance and emptiness. It is not of the Spirit and it won't protect anyone.

House Bill 6, as well as similar bills 8 and 68, is, in Biblical terms, a plague and a sin. I use this strong religious language, because I fear you don't understand just how dire the situation is. Deuteronomy says "Today I put before you life and death, choose life." This is not about abortion but about a way of living—how does this bill possibly choose life? It does not. Jesus said "I come that they might have life and life abundant." How does this bill offer abundant life? It does not.

Certainly not every trans youth who will be prohibited from sports will hurt or kill themselves, thank God, but many will. We have literal scientific studies about this. More than that, bills like this create an environment of suspicion and rejection not only for trans students, but for cisgender and straight students. Who can say without invasive medical procedures or examinations whether a particular student is "normal" enough to play girls' lacrosse? Students who someone *thinks* might be trans will be subjected to this treatment; some of the very girls you're trying to protect will have to undergo these invasive and embarrassing exams. Is that what you want?

But also, trans youth, in seeing these laws enacted across the country and now here—*here*—know that their lives, *whether or not they transition*, mean little to the people in power, they know that their *lives* mean little *to you*. This is intolerable.

I was overjoyed the day my kid came out to me because of the trust and safety they felt with me to share that part of their life. I am proud to be their mom. I am also terrified to be their mom. Who will look at them briefly on the street and decide today is the day I assault a freak? Who will casually insult them in the halls at school because they can't tell what gender they are? Will they cut their own beautiful skin to relieve the pain or try to take their own life because they can't see past the alienation and disgust thrown at them by their peers and by you?

I literally cried writing this. I need you to look me in the eye and know that I cried writing this. Because my child hasn't done those things yet. But so many others have. Because of how their parents, their church, their government have dehumanized them, have refused to listen to their experience, have failed them.

I have a trans student now who is the most caring, giving person. He does the dishes unasked, offers Ibuprofen at the slightest hint of pain, is highly competitive at board games, and is training to be a therapist for underserved populations like the deaf community. Recently he went back home to Mississippi to push back against the same kinds of laws y'all are considering. He went, knowing that there might be violent counter-protesters, knowing that the majority of that state wants him not to be him, wants him not to exist at all. He went to support and care for the trans youth of the state, and in exchange, he was beaten, not by counter-protesters, but by his own father.

I was texting with him just before and just after. Before, we were bantering about books we'd read, ones we might read in the future. After, he was miserable and self-hating, trying to mask the pain but failing. And this beating was *entirely* because he is trans—his father said so directly. And I, I was here. Helpless.

This student and my child are lights in their communities, lights to me, lights to God—and this bill would snuff out those lights. I beg you as a fellow Christian and parent, do not pass this bill.