

Chair Lipps, Vice-Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston & members of the Public Health Policy Committee.

I'm not going to get into stats and statistics, I'm going to leave that to the experts, but I am going to talk about my lived experience as a parent to my beautiful daughter who just so happens to be transgender. I have to be honest and say before being blessed with her, I had never been to the Statehouse. I never had any reason too because I lived in a bubble, I grew up in a Italian/Irish Catholic family and went to Catholic school with other children that looked like me and lived in neighborhoods like mine and were lucky enough to be able to afford tuition to a private school.

I was very privileged without even being aware of it. Everyone was like me, everyone was white, straight, and Catholic, this was back in the 80's so things were different than they are today and we didn't have all of the information and knowledge of different lived experiences from transgender people.

I have to admit my own daughter was the first transgender person, I had ever met and I fought it for a while but since she could walk and talk she had been telling me she was a girl. Me not knowing anything on the subject, I completely panicked and started to read EVERYTHING I could on the topic.

After about two years of my daughter begging for me to hear her, we took her to a doctor at the age of 5 and she was diagnosed with gender dysphoria. What that meant at the age of 5 is allowing her to wear clothes that reflected how she feels, like a girl, also a name change. That is it, clothes and a name change. The problem was she was attending a Catholic school at the time and we lived next to the priest of the school.

Well let's just say it didn't matter that we were his neighbor, it didn't matter that I was raised Catholic and went through all the traditional sacraments, was married in a catholic church, had all 3 of my children baptized. NONE of that mattered, what did matter to the church and school was my daughter was transgender and she was thrown out of the school in the second grade at the age of 7 for being who she is.

So none of this is new to me, I have been having to explain who my daughter is since she was a little girl in hopes to educate and shield her from the discrimination I was for sure was on the horizon. So at the age of seven she was thrown out of her catholic school she used to attend with all of her friends since preschool. So she started over at public school and things went well for a while until the topic of transgender children became a hot button policies issue.

My husband and I have been to almost every school board meeting in our town because most meetings are about transgender children and dehumanizing them on a public stage and some adults in the community have specifically mentioned my daughter.

She was 12 years old and trying to get through everyday life that we know is already hard just being 12 but to have adults pick on her on such a public stage was disgusting.

Since that time we have had to visit the Ohio Board of Education as well as the Statehouse on several occasions to speak on different anti trans bills. So I have had to fight for her at school, at the county courthouse because they won't allow her gender marker change on her birth certificate even though they changed the law in 2020. And recently she had to start over again at another school because the bullying got so bad at the school she was attending.

She is only 13 years old and has had to move around to different schools to find acceptance and now if this bill passes she will have to start over AGAIN. She also has a twin brother and an older sister that would be forced to move out of Ohio. That's what this bill will do, force families to move out of this state. No one should be told what to do with their child, I know what's best for her, you are just meeting her. Isn't that the fight I hear from conservative parents. What about my rights as a parent of a trans child, she needs access to gender affirming care. The government does not belong in the doctor's office with ANYONE.