

Opponent Testimony for H.B. No. 68
House Public Health Policy Committee
June 14th, 2023

Jamie M. Aubin

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Public Health Policy Committee,

My name is Jamie Aubin. I'm an Ohio girl through and through. I was born and raised in Cincinnati, my wife is from Columbus. And apart from my time in the Marines which among other journeys included a tour in Afghanistan, I have lived my entire life in Ohio. And even in Afghanistan, Ohio wasn't far. I was a rifleman with Lima Company, 3/25, based right here in Columbus.

I mention that service because I wanted to share with you a headline from this newspaper. It's a copy of the Stars and Stripes, the military paper, that I picked up in 2010 while I was in Helmand province with Lima.

The headline reads, "Gay recruits ok - for now." You see back when I served Don't Ask Don't Tell was the law of the land. Virtually my entire service you could not be openly gay, let alone transgender. That was over a decade ago but I still hear the same arguments now that I heard then. The same fears, the same misinformation, the same bigotry.

I will never forget sitting in a hangar in Kyrgyzstan, waiting for our plane home, and getting a briefing on how Don't Ask Don't Tell was going away. I remember a Marine asking, "will we have to share showers and bathrooms with gays". Gay wasn't the word he used. How familiar that question sounds today.

Now if you haven't guessed yet, it should be pretty obvious that I don't look a lot like I did back then. I wasn't able to be myself. I could still serve in the military, I could still vow an oath to protect my country, but I could not be me. It took a long long time before Jamie was able to exist.

Fast forward years later, shortly after coming out. I found myself the target of some pretty horrific abuse on social media. I spent a day being attacked by total strangers, who all felt happy to abuse a random woman on the internet, purely for being trans. The hate I received that day was unbelievable, the most vile comments you can imagine, including being told to kill myself.

What shocked me more than those things though, was that Marines I had served with, men I hadn't spoken to in ten years, men who had vehemently argued against gays being in the military. Those men were the ones who reached out to me. To tell me I was still one of them. That they wanted me to be me. To defend me.

Because they knew me.

The bill today is about gender affirming healthcare for children. My story might not seem to be relevant but I promise it is. You don't know us. You hear from people who don't know us. Who have no understanding of who we are, and for whatever reason have decided that they hate us. That we should not exist.

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You've heard a lot of testimony about this bill. These bills here and across the country claim to be protecting children, to protect parents' rights, to protect women's rights. What they protect is bigotry. In the limited time that I have I want you to understand that these laws, are not new. And they are born of ignorance.

We've tread this ground before, we've heard these concerns, we've fought these battles. If you pass this law you are not protecting anyone or anything. You are submitting to fear. You are forcing our children to hide.

But if you would listen to us. If you would learn to know us, you would realize how wrong you have been.

You won't stop kids from being trans. They will still exist. We will still exist. We will work in your businesses, go to your schools, pass you on the street, and some of us will still sign up to defend the same freedoms for others that they have themselves been denied.

The passage of this bill will harm children. It will harm families. It will be a cruel and unjust act. And ultimately one that will fail to accomplish its purpose. Don't ask don't tell didn't stop me from being trans. This bill will not stop kids from being trans. We will still exist. The only thing it will do is cause trans children years of pain and unnecessary hardship. I beg of you as someone who has walked that road please do not force our children to walk it too.

You have the opportunity to stop this. You can choose to allow children to exist as themselves. To allow families and their doctors to make the decisions that are right for them. You can give them the chance to chart their own paths, in pursuit of that supreme freedom of happiness.

And that is what I want to leave you on. Those who support this bill claim regret, and mutilation, and horror lies ahead.

I promise you the truth is happiness.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions.

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