

Dear Chair Roegnar,

Hello, My name is Jace. I am Opposed to HB 68.

Today I will share with you the story I told my therapist when I was 15, after confessing to my parents I felt like a boy. My therapist had asked me to recall the first time I remember feeling this way, this is the story I told her: I stole my sister's bra when I was around 8, I stuffed it with toilet paper and wore it to church under my Sunday best. When I returned home, I was disappointed, no one had noticed how hard I was trying to be a girl. I confronted my mother, pointing out all the effort I had put in to be a girl, she looked at me confused, "Why would you do that?" she had asked, and later that night I had cried.

I thought maybe if I had boobs, I would feel like a girl. I thought maybe if I grew out my hair and wore makeup, eventually I would feel like a girl. I thought if I just tried hard enough, I could force my brain into being the shape that fit in my body. For me, being a woman was a painful losing battle, but being a man was as easy as breathing.

Now, 18 years old, I'm finally getting to just, breathe. Without having to spend half my mental energy on pretending to be someone I'm not I get to spend time doing things I enjoy. I used to be unable to see myself living long enough to see my next birthday, let alone my career, my wedding, or my future, it didn't exist in that body. But now, with the help of therapy and hormone replacement therapy that I started at 16, I get to have a future. I get to make plans, and have long lasting friendships. You can't even begin to imagine how much of a relief it is to breathe without suffering.

But legislation like HB 68 makes my breathing harder again. These days it feels as though I traded in one prison for another. My mind might be free, but you all seem hell bent on imprisoning my body. You spread lies about me, and my people like we are nothing but puppets. I do not go to pride, and talk about my identity because I wish to seem different or special. In fact, I would far rather be neither of those things. I've had a life time worth of experience being different, I don't need any more. I am so open about my identity because I have to be. Because many of my people are closeted, or scared, or dead. I am outward about my identity, because if I am not, people will not see me as human.

The hard truth is personhood is only granted to those who are visible. Those you can not see, do not exist. Those who you can not touch do not matter. Those you can not hear, don't need to be considered. But I am real, I am a person, I have autonomy, and I deserve to matter, I deserve to be considered. I will speak up, it's the only choice I have left. And I will do it not with joy, but with desperation.

Just a couple months ago, the stall door was kicked in on me while using the men's bathroom, If I had been actually using the bathroom rather than checking my phone, I fear what would have happened to me. But even more than that I fear that the law wouldn't have taken my side. In the law I am treated like a political debate. I am not a perverted mentally ill threat to democracy, I am a person. I am a human being.

Please I urge you to Vote No on HB68 so other kids like me get the care they need. Life saving care.

Sincerely,
Jace Chellis