

Chair Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Shannon Scott-Miller and I am submitting this testimony in support of Senate Bill 11, the Ohio Fairness Act.

I've had the opportunity to witness parents deliver testimony in support of LGBTQ nondiscrimination protections and it always grips my heart when they talk about their concerns for their children.

Our daughter is our youngest, and I can tell you the exact time when I realized I could no longer protect her. On the third day of kindergarten, when our daughter was five years old, her teachers approached me to inform me about another parent who was behaving bizarrely toward my daughter. This man felt that our daughter fell too far outside of the gender norms and began to harass her in the classroom, stopping her from doing her work and preventing her from talking to the other kids. When we alerted the principal, we discovered that she was already aware of this situation and that she also felt unsafe with this man and would need a police officer present simply to address his behavior toward my child.

When the principal confronted this man, things escalated. He began cornering her in the coat room, where no adults could see, whispering obscenities and threats if our daughter didn't change who she was. When the teachers and other parents stood up to him and supported my child, he continued to escalate on the playground, no longer whispering, but instead loudly shouting threats and obscenities at my child, not only scaring our daughter, but also scaring the other kids so that they wouldn't play with her.

This situation escalated to the point where the police showed up one day on my doorstep to let me know that they would be watching over us because they believed the death threats online were real. I could hardly get my brain around that statement when my daughter returned home from school and let me know that she understood that I could no longer protect her in school, and that only the principal could. We asked for a meeting with the principal, begging her to tell our child that school was a safe place and that she would be protected there. At our meeting, she pulled Sean right up to her desk, looked her straight in the eye, and said, "Sean, there are no laws to protect you. So as far as I'm concerned, he's done nothing wrong and he's welcome at my school anytime."

Our lives forever changed in that moment, knowing how wrong she was but understanding that she was right about the law. We moved from that town where we had friends and family, from that state, to a place that was more friendly to our children, where we could help pass laws and tell our daughter that there were laws to protect her and help keep her safe. In our move, we left behind the notion of a boy who fell outside the gender norms and embraced the daughter that had been sitting there in front of us

the entire time. We, as a family, are better for that and everyone who has met Sean is a better person for knowing her.

Although our life is better now, I will tell you that you never lose that sense of fear – the fear that you cannot protect your child. I hug her too tight when she leaves for school and when she returns home. When she goes to a pajama party or a Girl Scout campout or summer camp, I take a deep breath when she leaves and I hold it until she gets home. I squeeze her tightly when she returns and I exhale, thanking God that she is not only safe, but that she has also been treated with dignity and respect.

That day changed Sean forever, too. She's decided that she's going to dedicate her life to public service and already has her college and career plans laid out for her. One of her goals is to run for office in the State of Ohio and to do what you do, our state lawmakers, which she says is to "make laws to make the world a better, safer place for everyone".

Now, law school is a ways off from fourth grade, and running for office is even further. But I would like to go home today and tell her that because she stands up to the bullies, no matter how big, because she let us share her story here today, she has already helped change the laws to make the world a better, safer place for all people.

Please help us protect all of our children. Please pass Senate Bill 11.