

10/10/23

Jody Davis, RN, LISW-S

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RE: Ohio HB 183 Ohio Trans Bathroom Bill

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

My name is Jody Davis. I am a Registered Nurse at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, and the LGBTQ Veteran Care Coordinator at the Columbus Ohio Veterans Health Administration. I am originally from Cincinnati, Ohio.

I grew up Catholic. I knew I had gender issues starting around age 5 or 6, but it was the 1970s and I didn't have the words for what I was going through.

I suffered greatly from not understanding myself, and I was bullied from a young age for being effeminate. Kids can be cruel, and I was emotionally, physically, and even sexually abused in high school. I was an easy target.

Right after high school, I joined the U.S. Army. I joined to pay for college, and also thought maybe joining the military would somehow help me be a better man, and stop these gender issues.

But things like sexual orientation and gender identity and Part of Us. They can Not be fixed. They can Not be legislated away. As a young adult, I went to a Christian counselor who tried what I later learned was Conversion Therapy. It didn't work, it only made me hate myself even more.

Well after my military service, I finally had the courage to love myself enough to accept myself as a transgender woman. Coming out was one of the hardest things I have ever done. It cost me a marriage, a church, estrangement from my family, I had to move and nearly lost custody of my child.

As an Independently licensed social worker in the state of Ohio, I have worked in several organizations here in Columbus providing counseling for transgender people. These organizations have included Clintonville Counseling and Wellness, Equitas Health, Equality Ohio, at Ohio State and at the VA.

I have worked with clients as young as 8 years old, up until 80 years old. I know most of the staff at Nationwide Children's Hospital Thrive program, and some staff at Cincinnati and Akron children's hospitals. I have written over a hundred of what we call WPATH letters, letters with a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, stating that interventions are medically necessary to treat these patients.

It is a wonderful thing, an honor to work with anxious, withdrawn and sometimes suicidal people struggling with their gender identities, and to be able to help them get treatment and become happy, outgoing and well-adjusted members of our society.

I have heard so many heartwrenching stories of veterans who served under Don't Ask Don't Tell, and were interrogated, humiliated, and discharged for just being gay or trans, for just being themselves.

This is Not the time to try and "legislate" where people can go to the bathroom! Actually there is never a good time for something like this. You have no idea the stress and anxiety transgender people go through when going to the bathroom. We are already worried about somehow being "clocked" in a bathroom of the gender identity that matches ours. That somehow we would be ridiculed, having someone call the police to check our IDs, or even worse. Believe me, the last thing on our minds is to harm someone else in the restroom, and bring even more attention to ourselves!

We just want to pee in a private stall, wash our hands and get out.

This bill promotes fear, and sends the message that it's ok for random and paranoid citizens to be on the lookout, to be "Karens" in the ladies room.

With boos like these, do you think larger corporations with diverse workforces are going to want to come here? Do you think other companies like Intel would think twice about making investments in Ohio, when some of their workforce will refuse to move to a state where such anti LGBTQ laws are in place?

Thanks for listening to me and to all the voices this morning, calling for Opposition to HB 183.

*Jody E Davis*

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