

My name is Dr. Lis Regula, and I live here in Columbus, Ohio. I am firmly of the belief that if humans were meant to fly, we would have wings. I can laugh (and you can, too) because I realize how funny it sounds for a grown man to be afraid of flying, especially since flying is statistically far safer than driving in part because it requires considerably more training and control than driving does. As someone with a fear of flight, when my daughter came out to me as someone who wants to be a pilot I had to do a lot of reflection and talk through my feelings. That's probably not the usage of "coming out" that you're used to, and yet I bet most of us have something in our young lives that we're afraid to tell our folks- be it a failing grade, not wanting to follow their footsteps in athletics, or dating someone we didn't think they'd approve of. Since her passion in flight has blossomed in spite of my fears, I have also had to help my daughter work through feelings as we learn what it takes to be a pilot and that she may not be able to do those things and follow her dream. As a parent, it is my job to love my child unconditionally, support her in her endeavors to grow in healthy ways, and to model for her what it means to true to oneself. Oscar Wilde once said "Be yourself; everyone else is already taken" and I know how important that is. Trying to be someone other than who I am has never turned out well for me, and most of us in this room can probably think of a time that following the crowd did not lead us in the right direction.

Considering that we are here in opposition of a bill that strip children like my daughter of medical care that helps them thrive – and all too often, simply survive- my fear of flying may sound like a metaphor. The funny thing is that it's not, it's a part of my life as a parent. We parents often think that we know better than our kids do, and that they should simply listen to us. We're older and experts at life, after all, right? Fortunately, that's not always true. Our kids teach us so much when we listen- whether that's new technology and trends, who they are as they grow into themselves, areas where we may have forgotten some things (hello, math homework!), or something else. Parenting, like teaching, is not just conveying knowledge but being open to learn as well. Let's face it- the world changes, and while that can be scary, it is also amazing to see what we can do now that was not even a dream a hundred years ago. The Wright brothers would probably be amazed at how far their machines have come, literally and metaphorically.

In our house, we often lean on the phrase "Feelings aren't facts" not in a condescending "get over it" way, but in a "let's check this perspective" way. My fear of flying makes no logical sense in today's world, and yet it is a very real feeling. When my daughter came out as trans, I'll be honest that I had a moment where I was incredibly afraid, even though I am trans myself and know the relief that comes in living and being seen as who I am. My fear when she came out, however, was not that she was making a bad choice or that she would regret anything. No, my fear was in losing her as I have lost too many people in my life. That fear, unlike my fear of flying, is rooted unfortunately in reality.

Every year on Trans Day of Remembrance we acknowledge the names and lives of trans people lost to hatred and violence. Or at least those names whom we're aware of. We also have considerable research showing the increased rates of suicide attempts and successes within the trans community, primarily when those folks are not supported. When they do have supportive people in their lives, those rates drop to similar rates as their cis cohort members.

My daughter's friend group, like many young people today, have their struggles with depression, anxiety, and fear. They are also predominantly trans young women. This is not because one of them has "turned" the others trans, but because birds of a feather flock together, as they say. If my daughter and her friends were a group of cis young women, no one would bat an eye. To treat her friend group differently because of who they are is the very definition of discrimination. Bills like HB 68 worsen those mental health conditions because they give a reason for those kids to be afraid of their health needs being ignored, anxiety over being accosted in public, and depressed that they may never have the chance to be true to themselves.

At the end of the day, HB 68 is a gross over reach of government into parent's rights. Just like a pilot has to learn far more about their profession than I do as a lowly car driver, a doctor has to learn far more about their profession than any politician does. Even more to the point, a parent gets to learn more about their child than any politician learns about that child. I've told you a little about my Vivian, and I wish that I had time to fully explain how her face lights up when she plays airsoft, or how much hearing her laughter as she plays with her friends makes every day better for me, or how I enjoy showing off her art far more than she (in truly teenage form) enjoys me showing off her art.

Thankfully, my daughter will soon be of an age where this bill can't impact her directly. That is not the case for every kid in her shoes. As a lowly car driver, I would not dare to think that I could tell a pilot how to do their job, even if that pilot is my daughter. I ask this body to please not put themselves and this bill in between the medical experts and parents who are helping kids to grow up healthy and happy. We love our kids unconditionally, even when we don't understand them, and this bill makes it harder for us to act on that love, and makes it harder for our kids to live their authentic lives. Thank you for your time.