

June 12, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Jaimie Ziman, and I am the mother of a transgender 8 year old daughter. You may immediately hear the words “transgender” and “8 years old” and roll your eyes, but rest assured, my daughter is here, she’s real, and she matters.

Around the age of 6 my child Phoenix told me she (“he” at the time) felt like she was a girl inside. I found the statement interesting, asked a few questions, and mentally filed it away as a “wait and see”. I was a kindergarten teacher for 14 years, so I’m well aware of developmentally appropriate things children may say, and I wasn’t too concerned. While making this statement, Phoenix also only played with girls, attempted to make her t-shirts into skirts, and preferred to wear long wigs when she could. She would repeatedly ask us to grow her hair out, ask for earrings, etc. but we didn’t understand why, and kept telling “him” no. Over the years, she became more withdrawn, anxious, angry, and impulsive.

Finally, this year, over pizza and soda, Phoenix told me HER truth. She is a girl, despite what her body looks like. She has always felt this way. She told me she was afraid to tell my husband and I because she thought we would think she was “weird.” I held my daughter tight and told her she is not weird at all; she is a beautiful child of God and deserves all good things.

And, speaking of God...we are a Christian family, but I say this with trepidation. We believe in Jesus, and follow His ways, not others’ interpretation of what the Christian faith is supposed to look like. Jesus loves Phoenix just as she is, and so should you. I believe Jesus would say, “Give the child the medical care she needs and trust her parents.” It is our belief that no one else should be making medical decisions for children other than their parents and doctors.

We have been fortunate enough to have a school system that supports Phoenix, and they have developed a gender identity plan with us, and all staff have agreed to call her by her preferred pronouns. We are fortunate enough to have a gender affirming therapist, who has helped to instill so much joy, confidence, and pride in our child, compared to who she was prior to therapy: an anxious, angry, scared little kid who was living a lie. And it brings us hope for the future to know Phoenix will have access to puberty blockers and hormones, if Phoenix, her doctors, and us as her parents decide it’s in her best interest.

The idea of this therapy, and future medicine being denied my sweet girl absolutely terrifies me and keeps me up at night, tossing and turning. You see, suicide and actual suicide attempts runs in our families. This IS preventable. Those in our families felt they had no way out. They did not have a caring therapist to talk their problems through; in contrast, our daughter does. And not just any therapist, but a therapist through the Metrohealth Kids Pride Clinic who is specially trained in gender affirming care. To deny this, and all other care, to Ohio’s transgender youth is an absolute health crisis on the horizon. Suicides will happen, children will be harmed, and families will be destroyed.

Please, do not pass this bill. Being a transgender youth is not a choice. To be punished by denying care for something that is biological is heartbreaking. Please.

Jaimie, Oliver, and Phoenix Ziman