

There are so many things about parenting you never expect. For my husband and I, a lot of our surprises came when we realized we were raising a child who did not fall within gender norms. It hasn't been easy navigating and when we started, it seemed like uncharted territory. Both of my children were assigned male at birth. As soon as my youngest could walk, she walked on her tiptoes, "Because that's how the princesses and Barbie walk". Her preferences were pink, princesses, and anything that sparkled. As you can imagine, this made some people weirdly uncomfortable. They told us to take away her toys and "give the kids some GI Joe's" to "cure" her of any feminine tendencies, like being feminine was a disease. But then there were other people who looked beyond toys and colors saw my child for who she was. When she danced like a ballerina princess she had so much joy that other kids joined in, including the children who had trouble communicating or connecting to other kids. She knew people questioned her for being a "different" kind of boy, so she noticed other kids who were treated poorly for being different and made friends with them. As early as preschool, her teachers told me she was the one to reach out to the kids who didn't fit in and always made them feel special. She never left anyone out. By the time started kindergarten, she had experienced enough of people "othering" her to be selective in choosing clothes and even her backpack. When we shopped for her first school backpack, she and her brother had a conversation that something to princessy might get her picked on so she came up to me with what she thought was the perfect backpack to make friends. It was hot pink, with neon hearts and a stuffed monkey head about two inches round. She squealed, "I found the perfect neutral bag! Everybody loves monkeys!" She has always had this endless optimism about the good in people. Her brother and I just laughed. The two of them are a pair together, they talk about everything and like hanging out together. When we explained to her brother she was really a girl, he had two responses "It makes a lot more sense than pretending she's a boy." Which he was 100% right. She had shown us who she was for a long time before she changed pronouns. His other response was, "How do we keep her safe?" He was 9, and he already knew the world would not be safe for her. He's fiercely protective of her. She is of him, too.

Our daughter was just a little older than 3 when she realized people were making fun of her being mean because she was too feminine for a boy, ALWAYS adults, never kids. She learned to adapt. She dressed as Tinkerbell at Aunt Beth's and a pirate at Uncle Brian's. It was exhausting for her. So we started teaching her how to deal with bullies, mainly of the adult age. When they asked why she had Dora shoes, she learned to respond "Dora is my favorite. Do you like Dora or Diego?" If they mocked her for wearing pink, "It's my favorite color, what's yours?" She's learned to disarm hateful comments from people of all ages and to stand up for herself. She is fierce. By 9, she begged to testify for the Ohio Fairness Act. We had taught her to read about things and know facts before making comments on things, so she was keenly aware of the laws being made for LGBTQ+ people. She did testify. She's spent the last 6 years fighting for basic rights, a lost childhood that I will never stop mourning.

That's where the actual challenges of raising transgender child started. Not that she was transgender, not that we had to learn and educate people about being transgender. It's the legislation. We never expected that one of our children would have basic human rights, and the other could be denied. I never expected to be fighting for my right as a parent to make medical decisions for my child. It was not a harmed "detransitioner" that came forward to start these bills. There are people who have detransitioned actually do NOT support this bill. It wasn't even a

parent who was unhappy or rejected their child for being transgender. When I met with the sponsor of the bill, he shared that my child was the first underage transgender person he'd ever met. The things I have heard in this courtroom go from saving our precious children from life saving medical care to the sports ban which makes our children villains, denying them the right to participate in things that promote good mental and medical health for them as individuals.

I could tell you that around 1% of Ohio is transgender, less than half of those are youth, and less than half of those are pursuing medications. I could tell you 0% get gender affirming surgery under 18, but that has already been said by the experts. I could tell you that only 1% detransition, and most of those state that detransition was due to rejection from family or their church, not that they no longer considered themselves trans. But you already know that. I could plead my case for the right to make medical decisions for my child without government interference. But I've sat face to face with legislators who proposed this and those who support it and I've been told that as long as my child is transgender, she does not deserve the right to life saving medical care. I've watched over the last two years while legislators rolled their eyes at people who asked for their help and mocked the suicide rates and mental health risks to edenying care. The list of goes on. So what can I say to convince you that that ALL parents should have the right to make medical decisions for their children and that ALL children deserve to receive life saving treatment? I have no idea. I am not here because I want to be. Families with transgender children did not put themselves in the spotlight. We do not push any ideals on others. We were forced here by people attacking our children and our rights as parents.

There are so many things about parenting you never expect. Despite all we have navigated with our child, having to fight our own government for the right to save her life is the last fight we anticipated, the last fight we needed, and the last fight we, and all other transgender parents and families, deserved.

Hello, my name is Sean and I am 15 years old.

I have been coming to the Ohio State House to testify since I was 9 years old. The first time I testified, it was for LGBTQ+ Protections. And now I am here begging for basic privacy and the right for my family to make choices about my medical care with highly trained, trusted medical professionals. It is so degrading to have to come to the State House and beg my elected officials to treat transgender people like me with basic respect and ask for basic Constitutional rights.

House Bill 68 promotes lies and misinformation about the transgender community and our care.

This bill also promotes the untrue and harmful idea that we cannot trust doctors and the medical association that we have in Ohio. When it came to my trans care, I had a team of doctors who helped me make the right decisions for me. It was quite a long and cautious process to get the medicine and care I needed. However House Bill 68 pushes the idea that trans care is being given out like Halloween candy. Which is completely untrue!

It is also untrue that parents cannot make the right decision for their children. No one cares about me and my safety more than my Mom and Dad. House Bill 68 prevents my parents from making and guiding the decisions of medical care. There are no other laws that prohibit parents from making medical decisions for their children.

Lastly, House Bill 68 pushes the idea that transgender girls are not girls. I AM A GIRL. My girlhood is not defined by my sex assigned at birth. When I think of girlhood and becoming a woman, I think of resilience, bravery, and strength. When I think of femininity, I know that it comes with an aura of kindness and nurturing toward one another. I am strong. I am brave. I am resilient. I am kind. I am nurturing and caring about others. I am a girl.

These stereotypes which are promoted by this bill cause harm to real people in our State. I watch in devastation as these ideals trickle down. Into my community, into my medical spaces, and into my school. Whether it's being in a medical office and refusing care because of misinformation, or in a courtroom begging for basic human rights, it appears in all areas of my life. And in dark moments, it appears in my mind. Whether or not this bill passes it still causes mass anxiety and chaos in my life. Wondering if I will have the medical care that my well being depends on or if I will have to move out of the state.

But that's what people like the sponsors of this bill want. They want trans people to feel bad about ourselves and they want us to hide.

But I have never hidden who I am my entire life, and I am not going to start now.

Ohio is my home! I love my community and where I live. I have the best friends in the entire world here! I don't want to leave. But laws like this are pushing proud Ohioans like me out of our homes.

I want to live by who I am, not by others who don't think I deserve basic rights. I want to live in Ohio. But if I do not have the right to choose to live in a body that fits who I am on the inside, I cannot.