

December 3, 2014
The House Committee of Commerce

Representative Foster and Committee Members,

My name is Heather Lewis, and I am here today as a mother of a 17 year old daughter. Until two years ago, I thought I had two sons. It turns out I have a son and a daughter.

Whatever your personal spiritual and moral feelings, I believe that you feel all people are sacred.

Particularly as a parent, when you gaze into your newborn's eyes, teach them to walk, watch them turn into young adults, you know that your children are the most important things in your life.

I have the most honest teenager in the world. Her former scout leader described her as "not having a dishonest bone in her body". It was her special anguish that she was unable to tell us her truth, that although we thought she was our son, she was in fact our daughter, until she was 15 years old.

I have seen my child curled up in a fetal position, crying, in spite of bi-weekly therapy sessions and medications. Being transgender is not a choice. It is the hardest thing I can imagine, and my daughter is one of the bravest people I know. She said she had no words to describe what was wrong. I am sorry to say that all the books I purchased, and discussions we had at the dinner table, about gay rights did not include the fact that some people do not identify as the gender they are assigned at birth. It simply did not occur to me.

I know you want my daughter to stay in the state of Michigan as an adult. She is brilliant, with an extremely high IQ and 99th percentile ACT and SAT scores. She is interested in math and physics, and computer science. She has been admitted to, and offered a good scholarship at a state University, and is awaiting the results of her applications to other colleges in the state of Michigan.

She deserves equal rights in the state of Michigan.

I am pleased that my city and our public schools, and the universities that she has applied to all have anti-discrimination policies that include LGBTQ rights. Further, most of our largest employers in the state have anti-discrimination policies that include transgender rights, including General Motors, the Ford Motor Company, Chrysler, Meijer, Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, and Beaumont Hospital.

While I applaud the effort to include sexual orientation into the Elliot Larsen bill, please do not leave transgender people out. They did not choose to be transgender, and they face an uphill battle every day based on their gender presentation.

Thank you.

Heather Lewis
543 S. Seventh St
Ann Arbor MI 48103

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Heather Lewis", is written over the typed name and address.