

February 26, 2024

House Health and Human Service Committee

Re: Opposition Testimony – HB 2792 – Written and oral

Committee Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony here today. My name is Shannon Berquist. I grew up in central Kansas and now raise two children in Douglas county with my husband—also a Kansas native and the son of an army veteran. I am here today opposing HB 2792.

I want to address the hysteria that has gripped our nation when people talk about transgender children. This fear is the reason we are all here today. People in this room are so afraid of transgender children, that they have spent large amounts of time and energy to draft legislation like HB 2792 that will impact such a small minority in incredibly hurtful ways. All of this legislation is fear based and not rooted in reality, and so I have to ask myself, how do we combat fear.

Humans fear what they don't understand, the unknown or different. If the legislators that crafted these bills and those that would support them were ready, I would invite you to learn from me. My family is not trying to start a revolution. Myself and my husband are doing what all parents do. We are loving our children. We are caring for our children. But most importantly, and perhaps this is radical, we are listening to our children, because children have important things to say.

When our son came to us and said he didn't feel like the boy we had been raising him as, we listened, and we asked our son what that meant to him. In the beginning, that meant that he wanted to paint his fingernails and wear pink clothing. Later that meant that he wanted to be called she/her and have a new name. None of these things that we are doing to support our child are groundbreaking or radical. We are simply listening to our child and letting her tell us what feels right to her. We are loving her even though these changes in her life are outside of our experience, and can often be hard to navigate.

Our daughter is a normal Kansas kid, she goes to a Kansas public school, she loves legos, art, and learning to play the saxophone. She plays sports on weekends and has play dates with friends. She is 1 in 420 kids and the only trans child in her school, in her friend group, or in our entire extended families. Her existence should not merit laws. Our parenting should not require lawmakers to take pen to paper. Myself and my husband know best how to protect our two children. Together, we limit their media to age-appropriate programming, and our children do not have access at home to the internet or social media. Their friendships are monitored to make sure that they are positive and safe, and as parents, we know where our children are when they

are not with us. When our children are sick or hurt, we know best how to comfort them and nurse them back to health. Our family should be able to decide what is right for our children because we are the people who love them and know them best.

I am asking today that this madness comes to an end. That the fear based legislation stops. I am asking Kansas lawmakers to take a step back and come to the table with open hearts and minds ready to learn from families like mine. Like any good parents, our parenting end goal is to raise happy, healthy, functioning adults. And to do that, we need the freedom to make the choices that are best for our family and the legal ability to do so. Thank you.