

DELEGATE VANESSA E. ATTERBEARY
WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE
HB0156
27 Jan. 2025
1 p.m. ET

My name is Cooper Tanbusch. I am a transgender man who goes to school at University of Baltimore School of Law in the evenings and works during the day. I am one of the representatives for the University of Baltimore's Trans Law Student Association.

I am testifying against Bills HB0156 – the “Fairness in Girls’ Sports Act.” I wrote this testimony last year when the bill was initially introduced to the House, and I will continue to resubmit this testimony until the bill is no longer introduced.

Throughout my childhood, I was severely bullied. I surrounded myself with a group of friends at school and when I would go home, I would be subjected to my adult bullies. My confidence was torn down, my stability was stripped from me, and, finally, my will to live was taken from me. Throughout middle, high school, college and a good portion of my young adult life, I was miserable.

From what little of my childhood I can remember, I have exhibited signs of being transgender from as early as 3 years old. I initially came out of the closet to my parents when I was 16; at that point in time, I did not know what being transgender was – this was 2008 and the information about transgender individuals was not as accessible – but I knew I wanted to be a man.

I was forced back into the closet. I began to perform poorly in classes that I had once excelled at. My parents had teachers, who were unqualified to do so, lecture at me after school about my mental health. I had already been in therapy for many years; my parents used the therapists as tools to invalidate my emotions. I was pulled out of extracurricular programs to distance me from my peers.

I was ostracized, alone and suicidal.

I'm 32 years old now and happy. I never thought I would turn 25, let alone make it to my 30s. I have not contemplated suicide since I began transitioning 3 years ago, and life only seems to get better as I grow, even if it sometimes gets harder.

Today, I recognize that what happened to me was a form of adult bullying, much like these two bills are. These bills, proposed by adults, aim to strip the rights from parents to protect their children. Further, these bills project to ostracize trans children and teach their peers that it is okay to disrespect their friends if they do not fit in with the status quo.

Children that are ostracized are bullied. Sometimes, like in the case of Brianna Ghey, the bullying results in murder. Children that are ostracized are forced to be alone. Children that are alone sometimes attempt suicide; sometimes, those attempts are successful.

I personally don't know if it's religion or fear that's incentivizing this kind of vitriolic actions from these delegates. I do know that they do not care about children in the way they pretend to. I have come face to face with many people like them over the course of my childhood and the malice is palpable.

As a trans person, I can say that I am personally not afraid of going to hell because people like these delegates, proposing these bills that are only meant to bully children, work hard to make life a living hell and yet we still thrive in these conditions. I hope the committee will consider disregarding these bills with prejudice.

Thank you for your time.

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