

Tammy Quayle

Oral and Written Opposition Testimony regarding SB 180

“Establishing the women's bill of rights to provide a meaning of biological sex for purposes of statutory construction.”

Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

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My name is Tammy Quayle and I am a resident of Wichita. I am a parent of three college-aged children, each of them graduates from Catholic schools. I am testifying in opposition to Senate Bill 180.

As I read and researched this bill, I found this bill has very similar language, almost verbatim, to bills that have been introduced in other states: in other words, it has been copied and pasted, not created by Kansans for Kansas. With this bill, what are we trying to rectify? What is the harm that we are trying to address? After 160+ years, why does Kansas need to codify this?

The answer that, I presume, proponents of this bill would say is to “protect women because they are vulnerable”. SB 180 goes to particular lengths to emphasize the vulnerable part — based on their physical attributes and violence and discrimination by men.

There are many examples in our history where it is true that bad men have inflicted all sorts of harm on women. But SB 180 does nothing actually address those harms. Because we all know what this bill is really intended to do, and that is marginalize or even legally erase another very vulnerable group - transgender and nonbinary people.

As you consider this bill, I urge you to look beyond emotions or a political win. We are talking about effects on real people here and so before you make decisions that effect people lives, I believe you have two obligations to your constituents:

First, seek to understand the science and medical research on this topic. For those of us who are not biologists, endocrinologists or psychiatrists, it can be confusing to understand. But if you take this step in good faith and with intellectual curiosity, you will need to consider that more than a century

of science has shown us that biology is far more complicated than what the out-of-state authors of this resolution describe, and that trans and nonbinary people's genders are real and valid.

Science is rarely black and white. Most subjects are much more complicated and nuanced the more you learn about them. That's why we continue to study, research and evolve our understanding.

One example from history that we all know: for centuries most people believed that the sun revolved around the earth. They were so sure of this that they passed laws declaring it to be so and punished those who would bring a different perspective. But then Galileo proved that the earth revolved around the sun, and his ground-breaking discoveries advanced our scientific knowledge of the universe.

We need to be humble about what we do not understand and instead of digging our heels in to keep the status quo (as people in Galileo's situation did), we should remain open to what science is telling us. In this case, the scientists and medical community recognize that there is indeed a spectrum of human sexuality and gender. Codifying a simplistic binary into our laws ties the hands of future Kansans. It doesn't allow future leaders to manage local or specific situations: SB 180 will likely have unintended consequences for the future.

Your second duty before considering SB 180 is to put yourself in the shoes of - and ideally have the courage to meet with - a constituent of yours who is transgender or nonbinary. Before you weigh opposing viewpoints and make decisions affecting their lives, hear their stories.

Some of you may claim that there are no transgender or nonbinary constituents in your districts. I will emphatically tell you that this is not true. I thought I didn't know any transgender people...until five years ago when our oldest child came out as transgender at the age of nineteen. Our child said they had known they were transgender for many years before they came out to us. Their teenage years were full of inner pain and turmoil. It is with great regret that my husband and I did not know how

much our child was suffering in silence; that at each Sunday Mass our child was praying beside us, begging God to take away their pain.

After they came out, we supported our child, educated ourselves on the medical and scientific variances in gender and biology and to paraphrase what I said earlier, my husband and I stopped thinking the sun revolved around the earth and realized that there was so much we had to learn. We helped them begin their transition by arranging care at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota. Eventually, with the help of these doctors and the courts, our child was able to legally change their name as well as their gender marker on their drivers license and other legal documentations.

It is not an exaggeration to tell you that these legal and medical steps likely saved their life: my child is alive now because of the ability to live authentically. I have seen first-hand that achieving the right to legal gender recognition is crucial for transgender people to leave behind a life of marginalization and enjoy a life of privacy and dignity.

I was taught in my Catholic faith The Golden Rule: treat others the way you would want to be treated. Before you consider denying human rights and civil equality to some of your transgender and nonbinary constituents, please have the courage to speak to members of the affected community. Treat them the way you would like to be treated: with dignity, equality, and respect.

Finally, I want to note that this bill will have an economic effect on Kansas. Families who have lived in Kansas for generations could leave. And this does not apply exclusively to families and businesses personally affected by having a transgender family member or employees. We know that diversity and tolerance is increasingly important to the next generation: people make decisions on where to relocate after college, where to raise their families; where to build a business that can attract the best talent from across the country. Let's give them a reason to choose and invest in Kansas!

The hidden feature of SB 180 is to marginalize or even legally erase transgender and nonbinary people. The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members: our transgender and nonbinary friends and family are terribly vulnerable right now. Kansas, The Free State, is better than what this bill is asking us to do. And so I ask that you vote NO.