

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Landwehr and members of the committee.

My name is Jaelynn Abegg. I am a transgender woman from Wichita, KS.

As the Kansas Legislature once again targets transgender Kansans with unjust and discriminatory lawmaking, I once again join many allies in raising my voice against the tide of bigotry.

Let's address HB 2791 directly to start. A 2022 report by the Williams Institute estimates that there are 2,100 transgender children aged 13-17 in Kansas, representing about 1 in every 100 children in that age group.

The committee will certainly be aware by now of the benefits of accepting and affirming the gender of transgender children, and the risks and detriments of rejecting and denying that affirmation. But let's review the numbers again. In 2020, Austin and collaborators conducted a study (*PMID: 32345113*) that found a staggering 56% of transgender youths had attempted suicide, among 86% who had thought about it. But two years later, a study by Tordoff and collaborators (*PMID: 35212746*) found that gender affirming care could reduce suicidality in transgender youth by up to 73%. Gender-affirming healthcare saves lives and improves mental health. The data continues to be clear, and medical consensus continues to support providing gender affirming care for young transgender people.

This committee has shown by its previous actions that it has a vested interest in the mental health of Kansas citizens, particularly children. Let me say again: over 2,100 young Kansans will thrive or suffer with your decisions on this bill. If this committee wishes to keep the blood of a thousand children off its hands, it will let this bill die here and now.

I'd also like to call the committee's attention to the cumulative effect of the legislature's passage of anti-trans bills in recent years. Bills like HB 2791 clearly communicate this committee's message that transgender people are not welcome here. As anti-trans bill after anti-trans bill works its way through the legislature and to the governor's desk, Kansas has earned a negative, high-risk, or unsafe rating for Gender Identity Policy

from multiple sources including the Movement Advancement Project and Erin Reed's Anti-Trans Legislative Risk Assessment Map.

And people are leaving this state because of this institutionalized transphobia. The 2022 US Transgender Survey found that 47% of transgender people nationwide were considering fleeing their state due to anti-trans policies. Due to the actions of our legislature, Kansas stands to lose nearly half of its 12,400 transgender people, and if they're part of a family or household, those people will go with them. Imagine if a city like Pratt, Basehor, Mulvane, or De Soto just disappeared one day. Does Kansas really wish to lose an entire second-class city's worth of tax revenue, brainpower, economic potential, and population count simply because certain individuals just can't stand letting people different from them live their lives?

I would remind the committee that Kansas was admitted to the union as a free state, a move that was fought for by many citizen-soldiers and freedom fighters during the Bleeding Kansas years. There was a vision of a state where people of all walks of life could flourish and thrive, each person with equal rights to their neighbor. I ask the committee to remember the legacy of its actions, and scrap bills like HB 2791 – a bill whose ideals would have any self-respecting Jayhawker rolling in his grave.

I thank the committee for its attention.