



*End discrimination based on
sexual orientation and
gender identity*

Statement of Iridescent Sylva Riffel
Co-Chair, Equality Kansas Douglas County Chapter
In Opposition to HB 2792
House Committee on Health and Human Services
February 26th, 2024

Good afternoon Chair Landwehr and members of the committee,

I am Iridescent Riffel, Co-Chair of Equality Kansas Douglas County chapter. I use She/They pronouns and I am here today to speak in opposition to HB 2792, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

I appeared before the legislature last year to discuss the impacts of other legislation targeting the transgender community- specifically transgender and gender-nonconforming kids. I urge the Committee on Health and Human Services to vote against HB 2792. I urge committee members to listen to medical professionals and queer/transgender resource organizations- not hate groups which have been allowed to speak before the legislature- often many of which do not originate within the state of Kansas.

These groups have historically shared a lot of misinformation about our community and our medical care with the intent of stripping us of our rights and our ability to live freely and authentically. I've brought with me today a binder of studies regarding gender affirming care, its efficacy, and supporting statements from every major medical organization in the United States.

Today I want to speak about the consequences of legislation such as HB 2792. When legislation like this is proposed it has outside consequences even if the legislation itself does not become law. When our identities are put up for debate- it removes our humanity. Our very existence is framed as something that is "optional" or "chosen" and it is this very debate that has led to mass misinformation to be spread about our community and has led to our demonization.

Such debates push hate and violence towards our community. This year I have lost a trans friend to violence because of her identity. When I appeared before the legislature last year I spoke of teenager, Brianna Ghey, who was stabbed to death by her peers-peers who were emboldened by anti-trans legislation and misinformation regarding her identity. I hoped such violence would stop then.

Shortly after Trans Day of Remembrance last November I lost a friend and fellow organizer after she was shot and killed for being trans. In the last week of 2023, Amber Minor was shot and killed in Raytown, Missouri because of her trans identity.



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Then a little over two weeks ago- Nex Benedict, a 16 year old two-spirit Choctaw teenager- was beaten inside a bathroom at Owasso High School in Owasso, Oklahoma by several of their peers. Nex succumbed to sustained injuries and tragically died.

The violence Nex faced was perpetuated through anti-trans legislation in Oklahoma and nationwide. Nex was bullied relentlessly in the months and year leading up to their death. Chaya Raichik- the account owner of LibsOfTikTok- who has encouraged her following to send bomb threats to children's hospitals, libraries, and school districts- had been appointed to the Oklahoma Library Media Advisory Committee- despite not being a resident of Oklahoma. Raichik's primary targets through her social media terrorism and she proudly called herself a stochastic terrorist on Twitter, and even changed her Twitter wall to include her logo inside of bombs- after several bomb threats were linked to her social media posts.

Raichik targeted the very school district where Nex went to school, even targeting a LGBTQIA+ supportive teacher in months prior- leading to the teacher being fired after a social media hellstorm targeted the school district and the teacher received death threats. After news broke about Nex's death- Raichik- now a government official- mocked Nex on Twitter and later stated that "transgenderism needs to be eradicated". Who else openly discussed the eradication of marginalized groups of people? We fought a world war over this. We as a country need to steer as far away from fascism as we can- but currently we are barreling towards becoming the evil we fought against in WW2.

Tom Woods, an Oklahoma State Senator, referred to the LGBTQIA+ community as "filth" after being asked a question regarding Nex's death. Oklahoma State Superintendent Ryan Walters made a post shortly after news of Nex's death was released focusing on "ending wokeness".

Nex's ability to live safely and freely isn't "woke"- it's a basic human right and need.

I personally have experienced what it is like to be targeted for my identity. I know what it is like to have someone like Chaya Raichik target me. I've been targeted by a neo-nazi website known as Kiwifarms which doxxed my personal information, my partner's address, my parent's phone number. Kiwifarms also then relentlessly sent threatening voicemails to my father, and had begun sending me death threats on Twitter. They also signed me up for mail I did not want to receive to show that they knew my address and discussed swatting me as well. I had to connect emergency services to ensure that I was placed on a no swatting list so I would not wake up to the barrel of a police officer's gun pointed at my face- all because I choose to live my life authentically.



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I was stalked for about four months in Lawrence because they shared out my license plate.

And just this year- there is an official party stance to ban gay marriage in the state of Kansas. Do you know how it feels to live like this?

Do you care?

This last weekend I attended and spoke at a vigil for Nex here in Lawrence. Lawrence- a supposedly blue bastion of Kansas- is still home to homophobic and transphobic hate. As we were walking to the vigil- several drivers passed by, rolled down the window, and yelled "You're all faggots". At a vigil for a nonbinary teenager who had been beaten to death by their peers.

How many of us are going to have to die for you to care? How many of our children will have to be beaten senselessly or stabbed to death for you to show your heart?

Would you want this to happen to your own children? Would you shrug, turn your eye, close your ears, and pass laws that make them the target of hate and violence too?

I've shared 16 pages of testimony for a similar bill, also heard today in committee, sharing resources and studies and statements from experts telling you why legislation like this is a bad idea.

Taking away this care will make the world a much worse place for trans and nonbinary youth who are already the focus of hate and violence.

You can end this cycle. All it takes is love, and a vote to protect trans and nonbinary youth. This bullying is leading to the death of our children. You are an adult- you can make the decision to help trans and nonbinary youth or you can join in on the violence.

A vote in favor of HB 2792 could be the very reason a queer or trans child chooses to end their life. A vote in favor of HB 2792 will condemn trans and nonbinary kids to death.

Should you vote in favor of HB 2792- please know that their blood is on your hands.

Thank you for your time and attention. I'm happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.