

February 1, 2016

South Dakota Legislature  
State Capitol Building  
500 East Capitol Avenue  
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Members of the South Dakota Legislature,

My name is Stephanie<sup>1</sup> and I am a mother of five children. I live in a rural, conservative area in the Midwest where all my children attend public school. In 2015, my school district adopted a policy allowing students to use the restrooms, locker rooms, and other facilities of the gender they identify with. This means that biological boys are allowed to use the same restrooms, showers, and changing areas as biological girls, and vice versa.

Unfortunately, in the effort to push this policy through, the rights of many other students were completely ignored, including those of my children, who have suffered severe sexual abuse, molestation, and rape and who will be directly harmed by my school district's policy.

I am a foster parent. All five of my children came to me through the foster parent program. As you can imagine, they each have boundary and trust issues, and suffer from post traumatic stress disorder. I ultimately adopted them and brought them into my home to provide them a safe, secure environment where they can grow and thrive. Of my five children, I have two daughters who have been the victims of unspeakable sexual abuse. When I first met them, my girls were broken and emotionally frail. Working with doctors and psychologists, we are striving to mend these precious hearts so that they do not become defined by what they endured at the hands of wicked people. But healing is a long process, and the slightest wrong turn can result in severe emotional and psychological trauma to my daughters.

A particular risk to my daughters is exposure to the anatomy of the opposite sex. To my daughters, the male anatomy is a weapon by which they were assaulted. But the risk extends to even being in the presence of biological males in situations where my daughters feel vulnerable, such as when they are using the bathroom, changing clothes, or showering. None of this is to imply that transgender students who are biological males would *physically* assault my daughters. I don't think that they would. But even if they have the most innocent of intentions, their very presence in my daughters' restroom or locker room will almost certainly cause severe trauma that will setback their emotional and psychological healing process.

When I confronted school officials with my concerns, I was ignored. I was told I was overreacting and I needed to be "educated" about the rights and feelings of transgender students. I am not oblivious to the stated interests of transgender students, but do schools have no regard for the privacy concerns and psychological well being of my daughters and other students who have suffered the cruelty of sexual abuse? Why do the desires of a handful of students to use the

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<sup>1</sup> In order to protect the privacy and safety of my children and myself, I am using a pseudonym and withholding information that would specifically identify us.