

restrooms and locker rooms of the opposite sex trump the rights of my daughters not to be placed in an environment that can harm them emotionally and psychologically?

Also troubling in my conversations with the school officials was their statement that neither I nor my daughters had a right to know if they would be sharing a restroom, locker room, or even a hotel room with a member of the opposite sex. According to the school officials, my daughters and I had no right to know ahead of time whether they would be sharing shower facilities with a boy. We would not know if, when my daughters go on the 6th grade, week-long, field trip to Washington, D.C., they would be assigned to room with—and even share a bed with—a boy. When I voiced my strong objections to this, I was again told that my concerns were not a big deal.

But this is a big deal. My daughters' emotional and psychological well-being is a big deal. Privacy and modesty is a big deal. Among the reasons we have separate facilities for boys and girls is to protect students from exposure that is demeaning, humiliating, and can even have emotional and psychological consequences. But when policies that allow students to use the restrooms and locker rooms of the opposite sex are enacted, the rights of students like my daughters are ignored and trampled.

I have been repeatedly told by school board members that this action is for “the equal and fair treatment of all our students.” This action is not equal or fair treatment for my daughters. Nor is this action about diversity or discrimination. I love and accept everyone, and I know everyone has struggles. I have been a foster parent for over 10 years to many children who come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. My home is filled with diversity. I welcome anyone into my home regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. But even though all are welcome here, I still have boundaries for them when they are here to ensure the safety and privacy of my family.

According to studies, at least 1 out of 10 children under the age of 18 have suffered some form of sexual abuse.² Schools have a duty not only to protect them from sexual assault while on campus, but also to protect their emotional and psychological well-being and to avoid creating environments and situations that would be harmful to them. Laws ensuring that students only share communal restrooms, locker rooms, and hotel rooms with those of the same biological sex are an important safeguard to protect vulnerable students like my daughters.

As you contemplate this legislation, I ask you not to forget about the silent victims of sexual assault in your schools.

Sincerely,

Stephanie

²Darkness to Light, “Child Sexual Abuse Statistics,” available at http://www.d2l.org/atf/cf/%7B64AF78C4-5EB8-45AA-BC28-F7EE2B581919%7D/Statistics_1_Magnitude.pdf (last visited Feb. 1, 2016).