

HB 6452, An Act Concerning Discrimination Testimony of Virginia and Emile Levasseur

As our legislators, you have the duty and the privilege to listen to the concerns of the people you represent in our state. We are here today to speak as parents of our transgender son, Dru. From the beginning, we were blessed with a courageous, straightforward, honest and hard-working child whose strongest drive was to please us and be the best he could be. This was evident when the private Catholic elementary school he attended suggested that he skip seventh grade. It was evident when he played the Cathedral organ for the midnight Christmas Mass. It was evident when he became the MVP of his high school girls' basketball team as a sophomore. It was evident when he won in the state science fair, and when he was about to become the salutatorian of his high school class. But along the way there were panic attacks and depression and counseling and many heart-to-heart talks. At first we thought that he was dealing with the realization that he may be gay. That was difficult enough to deal with in the nonsupportive environment of his school. So he transferred in his senior year to public high school, losing his chance to play his favorite sport, and giving up his academic rank and scholarships. He succeeded despite the odds. He got through college (four different ones to be exact) while working and surviving relationships that were challenging and heartbreaking. Nine years later, he had his degree and a deepening understanding about who he was and what he must do to follow his path.

That path was to take the steps necessary to become the person he has always felt he was. This meant that he could no longer put off his transitioning process. Yet he had been accepted into Law School and could not put that off either. So he did the unimaginable and transitioned very visibly through the most rigorous and stressful period of his life. There were three years of scrutiny, questioning, isolation, and discrimination, along with mounting bills and crushing academic demands. Today, as a practicing attorney, he has been invited back on several occasions to his Law School to speak about his public interest work. None of this very private journey has been told publicly because it is so personal and precious to all of us. He would never let us talk about these things with others and as I write these words, I know that I will have to beg him to let me speak. Which brings me to the point of this story.

There are many people in this state who are going through this painful process of realizing that their visible gender does not represent who they really are inside. They need to take steps to make themselves feel comfortable and whole. They have many gifts and are very unique. We have been invited into their world in so

many ways and as witnesses to their struggle we ask you all today to push this bill forward. Don't let another year pass when so many of us depend on you understanding our stories and recognizing that lives virtually hang in the balance. You need to set the standard that says that all of us are deserving of a chance to be who we are and live a life that is free from discrimination. Please include "gender identity and expression" in the Non-Discrimination Act. Thank you for listening.

Respectfully submitted,
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