

Leslie Jones  
Testimony in Opposition of SB 180  
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee  
Wednesday, February 15, 2023 - 8:30am

Dear Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee members,

I'm writing to you in opposition of SB 180 because it erases intersex people like me. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Leslie, named after my dad. I live in Wichita, KS, and have been a critical care nurse for 20 years. I've been a traveling nurse for six years, and I average around 50-60 hours of work per week. I'm pretty uninteresting because all I do is work, travel to work, work to travel, and travel to play. I love to see the world when I'm not working, and particularly enjoy experiencing new pubs and restaurants.

I was assigned female at birth based on external genitalia. By the time I hit young adulthood, that sex assignment paved the way for struggles, confusion, and health problems. In grade school I was in a girls' swim club, and it just didn't feel right. Swimming was hard because it didn't feel right in the locker rooms and swimsuits, and I felt exposed, almost violated because nothing felt right. It was also almost a little embarrassing how strong I could get even in grade school. I wasn't the fastest swimmer, but upper body, I was the strongest.

Later in middle school I played volleyball, basketball, and track. I sucked at all three. I would have tried football if they would have let me. I was bigger than most of the boys and the girls in middle school.

There were signs through puberty and post-puberty that there was something different about me, but I lived in a rural farming community east of Topeka, so I was afraid to talk to anybody about what my body was doing. I didn't have regular periods, and I had to be really careful not to do strength training because I could bulk up too much and people would make fun of me for not being very ladylike. I felt more comfortable in my body when I was bulked up, but felt like I had to conform to society, so instead, I intentionally remained thin.

In my early 30s, I was having some problems with high blood pressure and high cholesterol, and I was diagnosed with hyperthyroidism. All of these conditions were not anything experienced by anyone else in my family. Around that time, there was a show on TV that happened to be in the background one day. It was about an intersex person telling their story, and it was very relatable. That paired with the health issues I was having, I sought out an endocrinologist. She ran a bunch of tests and found my testosterone levels to be abnormally high for a cisgender female, but within normal ranges for cisgender males. My estrogen levels were low for a female, but similar to that of an average male. After seeing her several times, she diagnosed me with mosaicism - a variant of sex gene expressions where the sex genes tend to develop and express attributes of both male and female hormones and genitalia.

The older I got, the more testosterone I naturally produced, and by my mid-30s, my body was transitioning itself. As it began to match who I knew myself to be, I started using he/him pronouns. Even that was difficult because of stigma from society.

Legislators who don't understand biology like mine - like 1.7% of the population, contribute to this stigma and make it difficult for us to navigate through life. I had to jump through all these hoops just to fix something. Traveling even became harder. As I started growing facial hair (unassisted by external hormones), my driver's license picture and gender marker no longer matched my face. I was questioned everywhere - airports, bars, and it made life very difficult.

People with mosaicism experience a wide variety of sex characteristics, some express more through a combination of external sex characteristics (genitalia, body hair) and some internal sex characteristics (varying hormone levels inconsistent with sex assigned at birth, infertility). Some people with mosaicism have testes or ovaries without the typical functioning, or have one or both of each. Also, mosaicism is just one type of intersex expression. There are more than 30 known genetic intersex expressions. My point is, we are all very different, and there is no binary to anything about sex.

Legislation like SB 180 erases intersex people like me. We're a much larger percentage of the population than you probably realize. Most people probably know an intersex person, but don't even know they know them. Many intersex people, like me, don't find out they are intersex until later in life. Bills like SB 180 and several of the other anti-LGBTQ bills will make it harder for people like me to get the gender and sex-affirming care we need to live a safe and healthy life.

I don't get why some people put so much effort into inserting themselves into other people's lives. We're all just trying to get through life, be productive, and enjoy things along the way. I mean, really. Right?

Please vote NO on SB 180. Please don't erase me and people like me.

Regards,  
Leslie Jones