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HB 2311: Creating a Right To Place LGBTQIA+ Children in Abusive and Dangerous Homes Virtual Oral Testimony

March 12th, 2025:

Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 2311.

This bill should be called, "the right to abuse children Act" because this bill- in fact- creates a right for abusive parents or foster parents to seek out LGBTQIA+ children. I, myself, know what it is like to be placed in an abusive home.

I am a lifelong Kansan, and I am also LGBTQIA+. I'm also a person with disabilities. Rather than attacking my people- I wish this legislature would focus on protecting children- rather than setting children up for abuse.

Before I ever even stepped foot into my adoptive parents house, I was already sexually assaulted by Grandpa Bob- my foster parent and the pastor of a local church- Praise Fellowship Church. For months he completed what he called tick checks where he fondled my genitalia. I didn't know what was going on.

And then- my homophobic and transphobic parents adopted me. I told them what happened, but they told me that he was a man of god, and they ignored what I told them.

Within a week of adoption, I'd been thrown down the stairs, and the small lamp in our room had been smashed against the wall near my head. This was a common occurrence in the Riffel household. The first thing my parents did was pull me off my medication that I needed for my ADHD cold turkey. I'm also autistic. Rather than detailing the 12 years of abuse in detail I'll let you know that I've been thrown down stairs, repaired drywall that my dad sent my head through, been beat with studded belts across the face, been kicked, thrown, threatened to be shot while my dad has pointed his gun at me, been choked, punched, and countless other things

In 2012, my younger brother and I returned to the foster care system. I for about eight months, and my brother- for over a year. We should have never been placed back in that home. I actually don't remember why, but my case worker and my younger brother let me know what happened. I was coming home, and my parents had my brother sitting at the table with dog poop on a plate in front of him. I was a freshman in high school, and my brother was in 8th grade. They were forcing him to eat dog poop that they found in the back yard because my brother had made the grave mistake of forgetting to do poop patrol in the backyard the day before. I intervened, threw the plate to the floor and told my brother to go to his room and shut

his door. I stood between my father and him on the stair landing. There were about 12 stairs going down to the main floor- where we had a hardwood floor. I was thrown- my head went through that house's drywall for the umpteenth time. That hole in the wall- I too patched and painted- just like the others- but I don't remember that too well either. I've always had memory issues- but this was another concussion to add on top of the others. I don't remember much from the two to three months before that.

Growing up my dad was openly homophobic towards my cousin (we are close now) during any family event. I knew I was queer. I also knew I wasn't a boy. When I was young, I remember telling my dad I wish I was born a girl, and suddenly the homophobic rhetoric turned into what I've heard out of hate state groups say about me. He said that gay people are pedophiles. Now that focus is turned on trans people.

I couldn't come out to my parents. I was in the closet for my own safety and my own wellbeing. Now imagine- that I had started socially transitioning at that age and my parents adopted me thinking they could "fix me". You can't "fix" being queer or being trans. There's simply nothing there to fix. Rather this legislature finds that an adult has the right to abuse kids. This legislature- should they vote in favor of this legislation- are saying it is an adult's right to seek out kids to abuse. I barely survived my upbringing. I left the foster system scarred and traumatized- my sense of trust shattered. What abuse would I have faced if this legislation were in place? This legislation will attract abusers- those who want to make an example of the LGBTQIA+ children.

I've been through that torture. I survived, but without great struggle. My brother and I are close- why? Because we protected each other because adults failed to do so.

Don't fail these children. Don't set them up to be targets of torture and abuse. Focus on improving the KS Foster care system. As you've heard from others' here today- they need help. Focus on supporting their staff, and better funding the foster care system. The staff deserve it- and as a former KS foster kid- the kids need it.

Don't vote to legalize abuse, and remember a vote in favor is a reflection of the type of person that you are. Vote to protect kids, not to abuse them.