

To: Senate Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood
From: Debby Larsen, 5322 SE 17th Ave, Portland, OR 97202
Re: Hearing for HB 2307 Youth Mental Health Protection Act
Date: April 28, 2015

My name is Debby Larsen, and I strongly support House Bill 2307, the Youth Mental Health Protection Act.

I grew up in the small town of Grand Ronde. I am a mother of four and before I had my youngest, I had no idea what transgender was. I never knew any transgender people. I knew something was different about my child, and so did my husband. One day he told me, "You know, Eddie might be gay, and that would be just fine with me." It was great, but it surprised me—coming from him.

Then I saw an episode of 20/20 about transgender children, and something clicked. I knew that was my child. And I was relieved to know what was going on, that there was a name for it, other children and families were out there experiencing the same things.

After that, I had a lot of decisions to make for my family. Up until the age of 7, my child always wore what she liked – what she identified with. But, as she grew older, she gradually stopped wearing her favorite clothes, like her Hello Kitty rain boots. That's when I realized that she wasn't comfortable living where we did and that it may not get any better.

We faced a number of barriers to find adequate health care and school support for Edi. That's when I made the tough decision to move us to Portland. I'm so grateful that we were able to find counseling and support at TransActive Gender Center. It would have been devastating to fall into the hands of a practitioner who would not have been affirming or supportive for my daughter.

This has been a long journey already for my family, and it could have been much worse. I know it's not always going to be an easy road but when I think about some of the stories I've heard about other children not receiving support from their families, or health care providers, I can hardly bare it. Edi's now at a great school where her principal and teacher are very supportive. As a family we have support and counseling services that are affirming. Edi is happy and she's healthy, and that's all I want for my child. It is what any parent wants for their child.

I strongly urge you to pass House Bill 2307, the Youth Mental Health Protection Act.

Sincerely,
Debby Larsen
5322 SE 17th Ave, Portland, OR 97202