

January 20, 2021

Dear Chair Prozanski and Vice-Chair Thatcher and members of the committee,

My name is Lisa Woods, my pronouns are she/her and I'm testifying in support of SB 704, which bans the use of the LGBTQ panic defense in Oregon. The LGBTQ panic defense allows a person accused of harassing, assaulting or killing an LGBTQ community member to say they did so out of a fear or "panic" they felt upon learning of their victim's gender identity or sexual orientation.

I'm the mother of a murdered transgender girl. My daughter Nikki was a beautiful, confident, outgoing teenager. On June 6, 2019 she lost her life in a tragic hate crime when the man she was with found out she was transgender.

I know that Nikki can't be brought back, but in Washington state I fought to pass the Nikki Kuhnhausen Act, which banned the transgender panic defense ban there, because Nikki's life means as much as your daughter's or anyone else's.

Nikki's killer murdered her because he had hate in his heart for transgender people like her. But as of March 5, 2020, no mother in Washington has to fear that her transgender daughter's life will be valued less than another girl's, because the transgender panic defense is no longer admissible there.

If Nikki's killer had been able to say he had killed her out of panic because she was transgender, it would have been like a dagger through my heart. There was absolutely no excuse for what he did.

I'm asking you to pass the Transgender Panic Defense Act in Oregon so that no one who harms a transgender person, like my daughter's killer did, can say there was a reason for his crime.

Thank you for your time and consideration.