

**Written Testimony in Support of SJR 33**  
**Submitted to the Oregon Senate Committee on Rules**  
**April 25, 2023**

**By Marian Hammond, CEO of Brink Communications**

My name is Marian Hammond, and I am here today as both a small business owner and a parent of two transgender children. I support Senate Joint Resolution 33 because I believe the government has no place in my family's or my employees' private health care decisions.

In my professional capacity, I am the CEO, co-founder and now sole owner of Brink Communications. We're proud to be a queer woman-owned, BIPOC- and LGBTQIA2S+-led marketing and communications agency united around justice, equity and solidarity. Brink was originally founded in 2012, and we have been on the Portland Business Journals' list of fastest-growing private businesses in Oregon for the past five years. Today, we're a team of 45 creative professionals, grounded in our mission to shape new narratives through strategy and storytelling rooted in the wisdom of our communities.

I am also the proud mother of two transgender children. My 14 year old son, Nico, came out as trans two years ago, at about the same time that I took over as the CEO of this small business. Those two experiences — running a justice-centered company during an incredibly challenging time in the world, and working to affirm my children's gender identities against the background of escalating threats — are inextricably linked for me. In fact, they share one key thing in common, which is that our fundamental rights, freedoms and well-being as humans are under attack.

The vast majority of Brink's employees are caregivers, for children, aging parents, partners and/or members of their chosen families. It's one of our core values as a company that family and mental health comes first. Living that value means that when team members or the people who are counting on them are struggling, our business is impacted. We find ways to step in and backfill so they can take days off. We hire contractors and arrange job rotations so folks can take leaves of absence. We plan for more frequent turnover than we used to, because of the nearly constant external pressures families and individuals currently face.

The rights and freedoms that will be protected by SJR 33 are at the heart of my employees' and all Oregonians' ability to thrive. The right to choose whether and when to become a parent, the freedom to marry, protection from discrimination, and access to gender-affirming care are all fundamental to people's ability to work, to parent, to live.

I experienced this in real-time during the early days of Nico's transition. In March 2021, at the age of 12, he came out as transgender, with our family's full support and love. A week later, I received a phone call from the school counselor. She said that one of Nico's friends had shared with her that Nico had expressed suicidal feelings leading up to his transition and she was concerned for his safety.

It was the most devastating conversation I've ever had. He was a straight-A student, a Girl Scout and an athlete. His father and I had worked hard to create a loving environment where both our kids know they have our unconditional support to love who they love and be who they are.

And still, the experience of being in a body that he felt at war with was too much for him to bear.

I didn't go back to work after that phone call. In fact, I didn't get much work done for weeks afterward. I was living what it means to have family come first, which felt scary then — and continues to feel scary at times — as the CEO responsible for this company's success. When my kids need me, it feels like I can only take one hand off the wheel. When the business needs me, the same feels true for my family. Fortunately I've gotten very good at one-handed driving, and I work with a team of incredible employees and leaders who are able to step in when I have to step back.

It can be hard to understand what it's like to have a transgender kid, especially if you've never met someone who is transgender. Like most parents, I simply want to do what is best for my family — and that includes working with doctors to ensure that my children are not denied access to necessary and medically recommended care.

Since 2021, we have attended countless appointments with pediatricians and endocrinologists and psychologists. We have paid \$7,500 out of pocket so Nico could get a puberty blocker, even though gender-affirming care is covered by our insurance plan. We're currently on a 6-month waitlist to get him a bone density scan.

A year ago, we started a similar journey with my younger child Nora, who identifies as trans non-binary. All told, we've had dozens of conversations with the OHSU pediatric team about the benefits, risks and side effects of treatment for both of them. With the help of their therapists and doctors and our family, we have navigated these private health care decisions with intention and care.

Today, my kids are both thriving, bubbly teenagers whose laughter frequently rings through our house. Nora plays the drums and does roller derby. Nico competes on the boy's swim team and just started jiu jitsu lessons. They are each other's best friends and biggest cheerleaders. They tried out for the middle school play together, and next week they'll have their on-stage debut in Snow White, with Nico in the lead role of the prince and Nora as one of the seven dwarfs. They both talk openly about how helpful it is to use their bodies in ways that make them feel strong and in community with other kids who share their gender identities.

They also read the news, and we talk almost daily about their fears for kids in other states. When we had a layover at the Houston Airport during a family vacation last year, Nico asked with complete sincerity if I could get arrested just for being his mom. While I assured him that there wasn't a troop of gender police waiting at the arrival gate, I felt the fear, too.

I spent several sleepless nights preparing to submit this testimony today. While I believe deeply in the power of personal stories for advocacy and policy change, I also know that I'm taking an inevitable risk by putting this into the public record. Nico, Nora and I have talked about that risk. They know why I'm here today. They've read every word of this testimony, and they're proud that we're sharing our family's story.

By asking voters to codify these rights in our state constitution, Oregonians will have their chance to send a clear message: the government has no place in private health care decisions. That's why I'm here — to protect my family's and employees' future. I urge you to support SJR 33.