



Testimony for SB 52, Adi's Act

Senate Education Committee

2/6/2019

Chair Wagner and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

We are Lon and Christine Staub and we are here today to testify in support of SB 52, Adi's Act.

We are parents to our son, Drew and our daughter, Adi.

Adi came out as a transgender girl after her sophomore year in high school. Her coming out only made us love her more. We admired her courage to be the person she was always meant to be. We also knew that she never needed our support more than during her coming out because society still has a long way to go toward understanding and affirming people who are transgender.

Initially, Adi blossomed. She believed that her transition would bring her happiness. It was a summer of joy and optimism, where she felt free to finally express her feminine nature, although mostly at home. She was excited for the future, which gave her courage to start her junior year of high school and bravely share her truth with classmates and the community. When she returned to school, she found that some friends and teachers accepted her and genuinely cared for her well-being.

However, Adi quickly learned the difficulty of being transgender. There were many more classmates and teachers who misgendered and misnamed her, sometimes intentionally and repeatedly. She experienced the crushing loss of friendships and felt marginalized.

Adi was a sensitive and empathetic child who struggled with these challenges. Words hurt her deeply. After being a straight-A student, Adi failed in school. With each act of aggression or ambivalence, she lost more and more hope and fell into depression. Until 18 months ago, just two years after her joyful transition, she took her own life.

One event was particularly traumatic for us. During her senior year English class, Adi voiced a rare cry for help on an assignment in which students were asked to draft a memoir. Writing was her passion and where she could be most honest with herself and others.

Her story centered on the self-destructive thoughts she was feeling, including a statement in which she said "I often worry for my future safety." Tragically, in response she only received



minor grammatical suggestions. The teacher did not reach out to us or report it to the administration. We only read her memoir months after she was gone.

We need to recognize cries for help. And to reduce suicidality for our LGBTQ youth, or any young person who feels marginalized, it requires a major culture shift. Our youth need to feel supported at home, at school, in the community and by their peers. We have made incredible progress during the last few decades, but the continued high rates of suicide, particularly among transgender youth, demonstrates we have a long way to go.

Part of this culture shift is passing Adi's Act. SB 52 will send an important message that the lives of all of our kids should be valued, respected and affirmed, no matter how they identify or who they love. Adi's Act will give stronger, more consistent policy to educate teachers, administrators and school staff on how to effectively respond to our kids at-risk for suicide.

Adi was an activist who sought to change the world. We are committed to ensuring that we continue her fight for justice. Part of her legacy is ensuring that we take critical steps to create a more loving, affirming world for the many students like Adi who stand in the margins because of their differences.

Our school systems should be places of hope, optimism and inspiration for all our kids. It is where they open minds and pursue passions.

We ask you to pass Adi's Act so that every one of our kids can see a future for themselves.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to testify today in support of this bill.