



We build power, access, and equity for LGBTQ+ young people (ages 13-24) through leadership, advocacy, community building, education and peer support.

**An open letter to Colorado Springs Council Member
Jill Gaebler regarding recent transphobic messaging**

February 17, 2021

Dear Council Member Gaebler:

I am writing on behalf of the 77 parents of trans children (to include transgender, gender expansive, and non-binary) in Inside Out Youth Services' (IOYS) TransParenting support group, the 114 trans-identifying young people who accessed IOYS services last year, our Youth Advisory Council Members, the Safe@Schools Coalition including eight school districts and ten organizations across Colorado Springs, One Colorado Education Fund, youth members of the Gender and Sexuality Alliance Leadership Council representing LGBTQ+ youth in schools across the state of Colorado, and as the mother of a transgender child. On February 15, 2021, you shared an article on Twitter with the following message:

“It’s not transphobic to believe that biological girls and women need safe spaces; whether it’s on the playing field, the locker room, a jail cell, or a domestic violence safehouse. It’s disappointing that more of us aren’t fighting for women.”

I thought it might be helpful to summarize what is happening in our schools and in our community when it comes to the safety of our young people, specifically drawing from the 2019 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey for El Paso County in response to your locker room example. The state of Colorado organized a very easy to navigate data dashboard for folks like you interested in the health and safety of our community. For further and future information, you can locate that website by [clicking here](#) to easily research issues of safety where youth are concerned.

While I do not wish to dismiss the impact of bullying on cisgender students (cisgender: relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their sex assigned at birth), it is important to recognize the **significant disparities between those whose safety is at risk in these spaces:**

- 70% of transgender students report being teased at school while 3% of cisgender students report being teased at school **because of their gender**
- 35.9% of transgender students report being **bullied in locker rooms and bathrooms**, compared to 18.8% of cisgender students
- 40.7% of transgender students reported being **bullied on school property** while 15.7% of cisgender students report being bullied on school property

Your statement is the definition of transphobic. Your statement legitimizes and publicizes a climate of intolerance, dehumanization, othering, segregating, discriminating, and punishing trans young people for wanting to breathe fully into their own lives just like any other person would want for themselves and just like any parent would want for their child.

Our young people are seeing you and hearing you. Your words hurt. We thought you were our ally. You spoke the names of those we have lost at Transgender Day of Remembrance with the same voice that you spoke these words to other, condemn, dismiss our children, our families, our young people, our trans ancestors who have been murdered. We are shaken by your recklessness and saddened by your betrayal.

Parents of trans children fear that their child might be bullied for being who they are, they fear that their child will be unsafe and harmed, they fear their child might be denied an opportunity, they fear for their child's future. I need you to know when a leader of the community, like you, espouses a rhetoric that might deny a trans daughter the opportunity to play volleyball, be on the dance team or take a class trip, you become the problem, the barrier, the false narrative.

I need you to know that in 2019, 34.6% of transgender students attempted suicide one or more times as compared to 6.7% of cisgender students. And please hear me when I say that these attempts are not because of their identity, it is because of our community which discriminates and stigmatizes who they most deeply know themselves to be.

You can do better for young people. They need you to do better for them.

As parents of trans kids we have a lot to learn, as there are mental health risks for our kids (imagine what they are when parents and caregivers deny support), there are medical and developmental protocols for trans-affirming care, and there is the continual advocacy and education of those around us who need to learn and transform too. It can be exhausting! Ask a trans person.

I encourage you to learn about the needs of the LGBTQ+ community in Colorado Springs. Many organizations, like Inside Out Youth Services and PFLAG Colorado Springs, provide training, resources and support. As a member of City Council, you should be able to advocate for all members of the community. While great gains have been made, the LGBTQ+ community faces discrimination, housing, food and medical insecurity, underemployment, reduced access to services, and LGBTQ+ youth in our community remain the most at-risk youth for negative health outcomes.

Lastly, your comment is a reminder that my work as a Volunteer at Inside Out Youth Services is as important as ever. During our TransParenting meetings we support each other in learning to understand the fluidity of gender identity, we connect to resources to educate ourselves and that help our children, and we stand together to advocate for all trans people. The journey I have experienced as the mother of a trans young adult is one of joy. Joy in seeing my child achieve contentment and authentic expression throughout transition, and joy in watching my child re-engage in goals like finishing a college degree and establishing professional employment.

Your social media rhetoric is unacceptable. The LGBTQ+ community and its allies expect more and deserve better. IOYS welcomes the opportunity to meet with you to further your understanding of the work we and your critical role in making the world a safer place for all

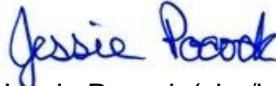
young people. Should you wish to accept our offer you are welcome to email director@insideoutys.org.

Sincerely,



Danette Tritch (she/her/hers)
Volunteer Facilitator, TransParenting

with



Jessie Pocock (she/her/hers)
Executive Director, Inside Out Youth Services

About Inside Out Youth Services

The mission of Inside Out (est. 1990) is to empower, educate and advocate for and alongside lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and queer (LGBTQ+) youth from Southern Colorado, and is the only non-profit organization in El Paso County to do so. Inside Out does this by creating brave spaces for young adults ages 13-24 and offering evidence-based programming completely free of charge. By providing support systems and teaching life skills to all youth in our community we work to make our community safer, more accepting of gender and sexual orientation diversity, and further the happiness and health of LGBTQ+ youth in the Colorado Springs vicinity.

For more information about Inside Out and our services, events, and staff, please visit:

www.insideoutys.org