

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA
Newport News Division

GAVIN GRIMM,)
)
 Plaintiff,)
) Civil No. 4:15-cv-00054
 v.)
)
 GLOUCESTER COUNTY SCHOOL)
 BOARD,)
)
 Defendant.)

DECLARATION OF DEIRDRE GRIMM

1. I am the mother of Plaintiff Gavin Grimm in the above-captioned action. I have actual knowledge of the matters stated in this declaration.
2. My name is Deirdre Anne Grimm.
3. I live in Gloucester County, Virginia.
4. I have been a Licensed Practical Nurse (“LPN”) for 30 years. I currently work for the American Addiction Treatment Center and Sentara Wound Care Center.
5. I understood for most of Gavin’s early life that he struggled with something, but he wasn’t able to put a name to it until later.
6. As a child Gavin was anxious. He never felt fully comfortable around people, and he had trouble being around big crowds at parties and events. Gavin’s demeanor changed noticeably when he transitioned and started to live authentically as a boy. He is now confident and comfortable with himself. He is not that shy, anxious kid anymore.
7. In April 2014, Gavin came out to me as transgender. I inadvertently opened the door by telling him about a conversation that I had recently had with another adult about their

transgender child. Gavin seized the moment, and said he had to tell me something. He was very nervous when he came out to me as transgender.

8. Gavin's coming out did not change a thing about my love and support. I told him it didn't change anything about how I felt about him. But I know it was a big deal for him because he wasn't sure what to expect.

9. I was committed to supporting Gavin from day one. The first thing I did was spend three days and nights reading about transgender children and how I could support Gavin. My husband took a longer time to deal with it and really understand what Gavin was going through. He tried very hard to show support from the beginning, and his support for Gavin really transformed over several months.

10. At Gavin's request, I took him to see a psychologist who specialized in treating transgender youth. She diagnosed him with gender dysphoria and gave us a treatment documentation letter advising that he should be treated as a boy in all respects.

11. Before Gavin began tenth grade in the fall of 2014, Gavin and I met with the school guidance counselor, Ms. Tiffany Durr, about Gavin's transition. I presented her with Gavin's legal name change order and his treatment documentation letter. Ms. Durr was very supportive of Gavin and was fully "on board" with using Gavin's correct name and pronouns.

12. Gavin used the nurse's bathroom for some time that fall, but he expressed concerns to me. Gavin said that it took him a long time to walk across the school to the nurse's bathroom from his classes in D-hall. He also said he felt singled out and embarrassed, and that other students made comments pointing out that he was using a separate restroom, saying things like "what took you so long?" Gavin and I met with Ms. Durr and Principal Nate Collins and discussed Gavin's concerns. Mr. Collins was very open to allowing Gavin to use the boys'

restroom. We all had a very reassuring conversation about Gavin's safety, and I felt fully supported by Mr. Collins.

13. Gavin, Mr. Collins, and I all set a date on which Gavin would begin using the boys' restrooms at school. Gavin began using the boys' restrooms in October 2014.

14. On November 10, 2014, a friend of mine sent me a Facebook message, in which someone was urging people to go the Gloucester County School Board meeting the following evening, on November 11th. The message said that the School Board would be discussing and voting on Gavin using the boys' restrooms.

15. I don't remember if the message named Gavin, but I remember it was clear they were talking about my child and whether he should be allowed in the boys' restroom. The post was clearly rallying people to go to the meeting and oppose a transgender student using the restrooms. Some of the comments were really terrible.

16. No one on the School Board ever contacted me or Gavin about the meeting. The first time I became aware of any problem was from the Facebook message I received.

17. After seeing the Facebook post, I started making a booklet of educational materials on what it means to be transgender. I included medical literature, information on suicide rates for transgender children, and information pulled from transgender equality websites. I made one booklet for every School Board member and took those booklets to the meeting and gave them to the members.

18. When Gavin and I spoke about it, we never considered not going to the School Board meeting. They were going to be talking about Gavin, my child, and I had no doubt that I had to be there. Gavin was also set on going. He has always been the kind of kid who will fight for himself if people are going to be making decisions about his life.

19. Prior to the meeting I knew nothing about the School Board's proposal. All I knew was that they were discussing my son and whether or not he should be allowed to use the boys' restroom. I was not aware of any plans to restrict boys' and girls' restrooms by "biological sex," or to create a third restroom option for "unisex" usage.

20. I didn't really know what to expect at the School Board meeting, but I really didn't expect it to be as brutal as it was. Gavin and I sat and listened to adult members of our community stand up and insult Gavin. I remember them calling my child an "it" and a "freak," and I remember thinking I worked in this community for 17 years as a nurse. I have been at many of these people's houses taking care of their moms and dads. I loved my community, and I remember thinking, how could people be calling my kid these names?

21. I remember one adult after another getting up there and talking about things that I don't even think were appropriate for them to be talking about. These people were talking about his private body parts. I just remember how appalled I felt for Gavin and how scared it made me that he wouldn't be able to struggle and live through all of this. Based on what I had read about transgender youth and the suicide risks, I was already scared for Gavin's life. Then we went to this horror show of a school board meeting, and it just made me even more fearful of the impact on him of his community not accepting him.

22. When the School Board said it would be installing separate single-stall restrooms Gavin and I talked about the new restrooms, and he was very upset about it. He didn't want to use them because he is not "unisex;" he is a boy. I remember him saying they may as well put a flashing light that says "Gavin" above the new restrooms, because everyone knew they were created for him, and only he was forced to use them.

23. The School Board voted on December 9, 2014, to issue a policy preventing Gavin from using the boys' restrooms. Gavin was seriously distressed by this policy. He felt so validated when he was allowed to use the boys' bathroom at school, just like a normal boy. He had never felt like a normal boy up to that point because he hadn't been validated that way. They gave him that validation, and then they took it away.

24. From that point, high school was especially difficult for Gavin. One night at the beginning of his year in eleventh grade, I found him sobbing on the bathroom floor, and he begged me to take him somewhere because he was having thoughts of suicide. So I took him to Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center to get him help. They put him on the boys' ward, which was very validating to him. He was treated like any other boy.

25. One time, Gavin called me and asked me to pick him up from a football game because there was no bathroom for him to use after school. There was no single-user restroom at the football field, and he wasn't allowed to use the men's room. Gavin told me he felt like his bladder was about to burst. It was like a gut punch to me, as a mom. If you don't have an issue accessing bathrooms, you don't think about how hard it is for somebody who does. But Gavin lived that reality every day in high school.

26. Gavin had frequent urinary tract infections during his high school years. He would hold his urine during the day and have to use the restroom as soon as he got home. We kept boxes of AZO, an over-the-counter medication for urinary tract infections, always stocked at home to in order to give him some relief from the pain.

27. Not only has the School Board ruined my son's high school years, but now they're affecting his college years too. Gavin wanted to have the gender marker on his school records changed to "male" before he applied to college. When Gavin was issued an updated birth

certificate listing his gender as male, it was a celebration for us because we thought he could finally get his school records changed too. I personally walked an official copy of that document into the Gloucester High School guidance department and handed it to the office secretary. They gave me the impression it would be no problem for them to update Gavin's records, but when Gavin started requesting his transcript to apply to colleges, he realized they had refused to list his gender as male.

28. When I learned the Board is now saying Gavin could have used the boys' restroom his senior year if they thought he had presented a valid birth certificate, I was furious. In all these years, no one from the High School or the School Board ever said a word to me or Gavin indicating there was any problem with his birth certificate. For them to come back and say that now feels like a slap in the face. It makes me so upset that they have treated my kid this way.

29. Gavin is a strong kid, but this whole experience has taken a big toll on him and on our entire family. As a parent, you want to protect your child and keep him from harm. It broke my heart to watch him suffer and not be able to do anything to stop it. And he was being hurt by his own School Board, which should have been protecting him.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on: 3-21-19

Deirdre Grimm

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