

21, 2005
January 24, 2003

Exhibit No. 2
Date 1-21-05
Bill No. JB 202

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee

My name is Bernadette Franks-Ongoy; I am the executive director of the Montana Advocacy Program. More importantly I am a mom of two teenagers, Andrew 16 and Catherine 14. We moved to Montana five years ago from Hawaii. Most people ask why did you move? What a change it must be. And my response is always the same. Montana, Helena is a great place. Hawaii will always be home. Helena has been good to us and is providing opportunities for me and my children that we would not have otherwise have. Helena is a very rich environment. Good, honest hard working people, a ski hill in our back yard, mountains with incredible bike trails, the Archie Bray and the Grand Street Theater. We have created a whole new second home, a place we feel like we belonged, a place we felt safe. That was true until December 7, 2002 when Andrew became the victim of a hate crime.

Never would I have ever believed that this could happen, in our new home town. I heard about things like this happening to other people but never thought it would or could happen to a member of my family.

Before I tell you what happen, let me tell you a little about Andrew. He is a great kid, not just because he is my son, but most people would want a son like him. He attends St. Andrew's catholic school, does relatively well in school, plays on the school basketball team, is well liked by his teachers and schoolmates, is respectful to young kids and elders, does not smoke or drink. He has his license. Has shown good judgment in driving and goes to church every Sunday at St. Helena Cathedral. Andrew is not perfect; he is 16 and those of you that are parents understand that age!

We did everything the police told us. We were scared, I was mad. How dare someone target this kid for no reason or at least no reason that we knew. I did not want to believe that this was a hate crime. I kept asking Andrew to think about what he had done to cause this. In my life experience, people are good and if they act otherwise there is normally a reason. I tried to make this Andrew's fault. He must have gotten someone mad and he did not want to tell me about it.

A week later Andrew was on the computer and he received an instant message from someone he did not know. It was the same screen name that threaten him.

Committee member I am going to read exactly from the transcript that is on file with the police report. This is hard to read, it is hard to hear. It is a hate crime. While I read, imagine bring Andrew, imagine being Andrew and Catherine's parents, wanting to keep them safe but not knowing from who or how.

BoyBlondy69: and the faggot returns

Afobike: why are you doing this to me?

Afobike: I don't even know you

BoyBlondy69: i fuckin hate you

Afobike: what did I do??????

Afobike: maybe if you explain it to me I'll understand

Afobike: but I find that hard since I don't know who you are

BoyBlondy69: im doing others justice you pussy

BoyBlondy69: we know where you live

Andrew did nothing to cause or to deserve this. All he is, is who he is. A young man who loves to sing, dance and participate at Grandstreet.

The people behinds this words and acts need to be held accountable.

This type of behavior needs to be stopped and should be punished.

No one has a right to intimidate, harass and cause the type of fear that was caused for us. No one has a right to make us feel unsafe in our home town.

Your home town.

Crimes like these happen because we, all of us have allowed it, tolerate it and say things like oh its just words, there is no real harm. Well, real harm was caused, fear was caused, our lives have been altered.

I am sort of embarrassed to be here today asking you to amend the law to include sexual orientation, because until this happen to our family I was not motivated to act.

As the policy makers for the State of Montana please set the standard of behavior high. Demand that all people be treated with respect; send the message that ignorance will not be tolerated.

This was my kid but it could have just as easily been yours.

Thanks you.

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