

# Tippecanoe County OKs gender ID protections

Heated debate precedes 3-0 vote by commissioners

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After a second — and final — vote Monday by the Tippecanoe County Board of Commissioners, gender identity protections now span Tippecanoe County.

Commissioners voted 3-0 to pass the amendment, joining the cities of Lafayette and West Lafayette in support of gender ID protections.

Like previous hearings, the ordinance remained a heated topic among the public.

Jamie Keating identified as a transgender woman and spoke in favor of the amendment, dismissing claims that the protections would embolden sexual predators in restrooms.

“Deviant behavior, no matter where it comes from — straight or gay — will occur no matter what in our world,” Keating said. “Whether this law passes or not, if someone is going to be a deviant in the bathroom, they will be. And this law nor any other law put into existence will stop them.”

Susan Blake spoke against the amendment, identifying herself as a scientist and questioning the scientific backing behind gender identity. Blake cited a study by Lawrence Mayer and Paul McHugh in the fall edition of *The New Atlantis* as evidence that the jury is still out on the science of gender identity.

The executive summary of the study argues that gender identity is not an “innate, fixed property of human beings that is independent of biological sex.”

“The hard science is not there,” Blake said.

Blake also expressed concerns that decisions like this set long-term cultural norms.

“I am concerned that ideology is far outpacing science,” Blake said. “We are subjecting children to our social experimentation.”

Just before the vote, Commissioners Tom Murtaugh and Tracy Brown explained why they would not change their vote.

“This ordinance focuses on employment, housing and public accommodations,” Brown said. “Again, public accommodations most likely means restrooms, but I don’t think that should be our sole focus.”

Looking forward, Trans Lafayette program director Skye Brown said activists plan to continue pushing for trans issues.

“After this local ordinance, I hope that we might contribute to the organization and passing of a state policy change similar to Sen. (Ron) Alting’s bill that was proposed this past winter,” Brown said. “I’m also always very concerned about the massive health disparities trans people experience locally because across Indiana and even in

Lafayette, trans people have very limited access to health care generally, transition-related care and appropriate health insurance coverage.”

The amendment also added a definition for veteran status, which was already protected but undefined.

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**Skye Brown, program director of Trans Lafayette, speaks Monday in favor of gender identity protections at the meeting.**

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