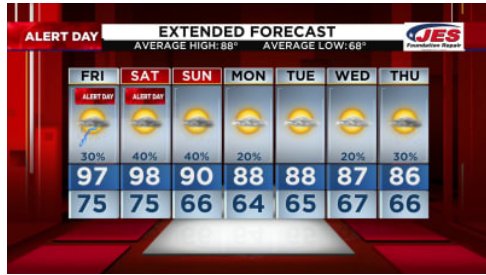




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1 HOUR AGO
Weather Authority Alert Day issued for Thursday, July 27-Saturday July 29
 Your Local Weather Authority has issued a Weather Authority Alert Day starting at 2 p.m. on Thursday, July 27 that will expire at midnight on Saturday, July 29.

BREAKING NEWS

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LOCAL NEWS

Roanoke County mom of trans daughter shows concern for new transgender student policy

'It's very scary as a parent. It's very scary as an ally.'

Lindsey Kennett, Weekend Anchor / Reporter

Published: July 27, 2023, 7:06 PM

Tags: Transgender, Student, Roanoke County, Schools

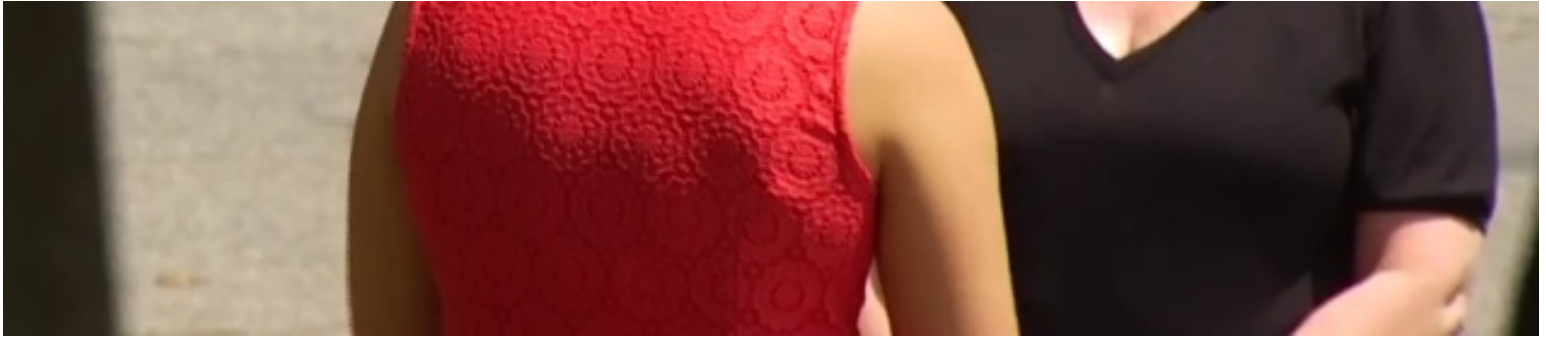


NEWS SPORTS FEATURES WATCH LIVE WEATHER TRAFFIC NEWSLETTERS CONTACT US BREAKING



Roanoke County Looming UPS strike Bear cub euthanized Superhero toy drive





ROANOKE COUNTY, Va. – Sherry Howard’s daughter, Elisa, came out as transgender in 8th grade back in 2019. First, to her family, then her peers.

“As you can imagine as a parent it can be difficult to grasp,” Howard said.

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Howard says the pandemic allowed them time to research, reflect and talk as a family, attending therapy together.

“And then when she was ready, when she went back to school, when school opened, she went back as Elisa,” Howard said.

Now 17 years old, Elisa is about to enter her senior year at Roanoke County Public Schools. Howard says they’ve already been through the process of legally changing Elisa’s official records to reflect her female identity. Elisa’s also undergoing hormone therapy.

But with the new state [policies](#) regarding transgender students, Howard worries what this could mean for her child and other transgender kids.

“Some of these model policies make it okay to discriminate and to bully against transgender students,” Howard said.

For Elisa's safety, Howard did not want to publicly share Elisa's picture, adding that her daughter has been bullied since transitioning.

"She has not been treated very well at school. It's been a very tough transition for her," Howard said. "She has friends at school. And she definitely has allies at school within the staff. But my fear is that these model policies will push that back."

"It's forcibly outing transgender students who haven't come out to their parents, but feel safe enough to come out in schools," Howard said. "LGBTQ children are at risk. They're at risk. There's a huge homeless population in LGBTQ youth."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a [study](#) of youth in grades 7-12 found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth were more than twice as likely to have attempted suicide as their heterosexual peers.

Roanoke County Public Schools have been the [center of controversy](#) when it comes to LGBTQ issues, including in [books](#) and classroom materials.

Glen Cove Elementary School parent Damon Gettier spoke out against LGBT materials in school at a board meeting back in May.

"I had to explain to my 9-year-old what transgender was because Glen Cove Elementary woke staff put me in a situation where I had to," Gettier said.

Roanoke County Public Schools Spokesperson Chuck Lionberger says the district's focus is ensuring a welcoming community for all.

"We're here to teach students," Lionberger said. "We're here to help students learn. And we're here to make sure that every single student, regardless of belief or background, feels confident and feels welcomed and included."

But Howard says she fears the unknown.

"It's going to hurt some children," Howard said. "And it's very scary as a parent. It's very scary as an ally."

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Lindsey Kennett

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