

# Sherman High School transgender student loses lead theater role over gender policy



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SHERMAN, Texas (KXII) - A Sherman High School policy has taken a lead role away from a transgender theater student.

Senior, Max Hightower, has been a member of Bearcat Theater throughout high school.

“He puts in the effort. I mean, I can’t tell you how many times they’ve been singing in the bedroom,” said his father, Phillip Hightower.

This hard work paid off when he landed the lead male role in the play ‘Oklahoma!’ about two weeks ago.

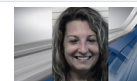
“It was a beautiful day,” Hightower said.

Hightower said this excitement was cut short days later when the Sherman High School Principal called him to tell him about a new policy.

“Actors and actresses could only play a role that was the same gender they were assigned at birth,” Hightower said, detailing his conversation with the principal.

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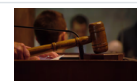
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Because Max identifies as a transgender male, he could no longer be cast as the male lead.

“I was devastated,” Hightower said.

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“But they allowed Max to dress up as a male,” Hightower said.

Something Hightower says has been a part of theater since the start.

“All kinds of actors have played all kinds of parts,” Hightower said, “I mean, I grew up watching Mrs. Doubtfire.”

Hightower thought losing the role would crush his son.

“I expected him to be crying, but no, Max is a fighter,” Hightower said.

In a statement, the district said the whole show needs to be postponed because of sexual content and profanity.

Additionally, SISD said there is no policy on how students are assigned to roles, but for this production, the gender of the role as identified in the script will be used for casting. This may not apply to future productions.

The Hightowers are now determined to get Max back into the role and keep Sherman Theater a safe space for all students.

“I want every kid to be recognized and noticed and allowed to be themselves,” Hightower said.

The new date of the production will be around mid-January.

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