

Families Split Apart: Families Fleeing Anti-Trans Laws File Amicus In Supreme Court Case

The amicus brief of families who have been impacted by anti-trans legislation and force to split apart was one of many filed on Tuesday in the *L.W. v. Skrametti* case challenging TN's trans care ban.



MIRA LAZINE
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On Tuesday, [several amicus briefs](#) were filed in support of the plaintiffs in the upcoming Supreme Court case, *L.W. v. Skremetti*, with one brief highlighting harrowing stories of families fleeing their home states to access gender-affirming care for their children. This case involves Tennessee's [2023 gender-affirming care ban](#), a sweeping law that severely restricts the rights of transgender Tennesseans, particularly minors. The plaintiffs are the Williams family and their 15-year-old transgender daughter, who are challenging the state's Attorney General Jonathan Skremetti on the legality of this law. Represented by the ACLU, they have faced an uphill legal battle after the Court of Appeals rejected their request to place an injunction on the bill.

One of the most impactful [briefs](#) details the stories of five families with transgender youth, all of whom have uprooted their lives, moving from one state to another to escape persecution. The Jones family, for example, lived in Texas with their 16-year old daughter, Jenny, whom they describe as a kind, caring girl with many talents with dreams of attending Stanford and becoming a doctor.

The brief outlines a journey typical of many transgender youth. Jenny showed an immense dislike of being treated as a boy from a young age, and her mental health deteriorated when she reached puberty. "The recognition that she was not a boy, but was trapped in a boy's body, was a very dark place for Jenny's mental health," says the brief. This crisis escalated, leading to self-harm and suicidal ideation. While puberty blockers initially helped, it wasn't enough—Jenny "had finally recognized who she is but she still was not able to fully be that person." However, once she started estrogen therapy and joined girls' activities at school, her mental health improved significantly as she "gradually started feeling happier with the feminine changes in her body."

The brief then turned towards the impact of anti-trans legislation on Jenny and her family. When Texas began pushing [Senate Bill 14](#), a sweeping ban on gender-affirming care for minors, Jenny and her family were terrified. They considered boarding schools and flights to nearby states to access gender-affirming care, but leaving wasn't simple. Jenny's father needed to stay in Texas for his job, and their eldest daughter was starting her senior year of high school. Ultimately, Jenny and her mother made the difficult decision to move to Oregon, leaving the rest of the family behind in Texas.

“Jenny and her mother had to leave behind not only their family, but also the community of friends that they had developed over the course of living in the state 10 years. It was also difficult for them to feel like a family from afar. Jenny's mother missed being around for her eldest daughter during her senior year of high school, including celebrating her birthday, helping with her college search and attending her final school play,” says the brief. Financial strain followed, with the brief noting that the ban caused the family “nothing but harm.”

Another case involves Leni Doe and her 14-year-old son, Noah, from North Carolina. Described as a "boys' boy" from a young age, Noah disliked anything associated with femininity, wanted to dress as a boy, and was miserable when forced to conform to standards set for girls. He enjoyed skateboarding and being outdoors.

Noah's mental health took a severe turn when he hit puberty and began his menstrual cycle, triggering anxiety attacks and thoughts of self-hate and suicide. By the time his family sought help, it was too late for puberty blockers. After years of therapy and discussions with medical professionals, they were ready to start testosterone therapy when [North Carolina's House Bill 808](#) was enacted, halting Noah's progress and crushing his hopes. This led to a costly \$10,000 move to Leni's home state of Michigan, which the brief describes as “a financial burden from which the family is still recovering.” Noah had to start over with new providers, causing further delays in his care.

Because of the high demand from families moving to access gender-affirming care, Noah waited 10 months for his first appointment. He had to meet with social workers, endocrinologists, therapists, and nurses before his care could begin. “Now that Noah is receiving hormone therapy, he is the happiest and healthiest version of himself. He has a great group of friends, is social, and is looking to the future. For a while, Leni thought this would never be possible.”

Parker Chapman’s story is similar. A once-thriving young girl, she fell into depression and self-harm in order “escape the pain from her biological sex not aligning with her gender identity” when puberty set in. When she came out to her parents, they saw their child “smile for the first time in years.” Parker began treatment, including puberty blockers and later estrogen, which made her “noticeably happier, well-adjusted and talkative again,” the brief continues, “Her self-harming behaviors, which had improved but had not completely resolved over the course of her mental health treatment, also stopped.”

However, Missouri’s [Senate Bill 49](#), banning gender-affirming care for minors, set Parker back. “Parker experienced a setback in her self-harm; although she tried to hide it, Jackie saw marks from cutting on her legs,” the brief states. Parker had also revealed to her parents that before receiving gender-affirming treatment, she had contemplated suicide, describing her life as “torturous, like living in a bad dream.” Despite this, Parker pushed herself through summer school, worked full-time at an internship, graduated early, and enrolled in a college in Minnesota—all within months. This came at a cost: she had to leave her family behind and miss key moments like high school graduation with her peers.

Other stories in the brief illustrate families who cannot afford to move. Fourteen-year-old Richard from Texas was on testosterone when the care ban passed, forcing his family to make regular, costly trips to New Mexico. This was particularly challenging as they are low-income and face racial discrimination. Similarly, 17-year-old Owen from Tennessee had been receiving care through Cincinnati Children’s Hospital in

Ohio, but when Ohio passed **House Bill 68**, the family had to seek care in Illinois, the nearest available state. Moving is not an option, so they do their best to provide Owen the care he needs.

The stories in the briefs highlight just what families have to go through to get their trans kids essential medical care, and the harm that bans on gender-affirming care do to people who are just trying to take care of their mental and physical health. These bans don't just impact care—they split families apart, forcing parents and children to live in separate states, missing out on important life events and daily connections. These bans aren't done to protect kids, but rather to satiate the needs of people who hate them simply for existing as who they are. Families are left with an impossible choice: stay together and risk their child's well-being or separate to get the care the child needs.

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A guest post by

Mira Lazine

Mira Lazine is a freelance journalist covering LGBTQ+ issues, politics, and science. She can be found at miralazine.com or on BlueSky, @miralazine



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TransFormAndFunction TransFormAndFunction Sep 5

It's very difficult to fully process these stories, to see kids being so brazenly abused by the st
It's very difficult to go have a normal day after reading about what they are currently going th
and hearing the echos of what many of us went through during the early parts of our lives. I c
imagine getting to the point where both my parents and my doctors are able to give me a mec
lifeline for the kind of existentially unbearable dysphoria that many of us experience during pu
only for a bunch of politicians and weirdos to swoop in and rip that lifeline away while claiming
its for our own good.

It's very difficult to fully process these stories.

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1 reply



Mitchell Tillison Sep 5

My family is one of those that had to move from TX. We landed in WA. The cost of that move
immeasurable to our bank account and to our credit. We had to borrow money from family to
it happen.

We also worried for the months leading up to that move, as I went to Austin multiple times to
legislators and to give testimony during the SB14/HB1686 committee hearing, that we'd beco
one of those split families. Our cisgender son was in the middle of his own mental health crisi
included two attempts to take his own life. He had a while support system in TX that we were
terrified to remove him from in order to protect our trans daughter's rights.

The only reasons we didn't ultimately make that difficult decision to split apart, was our son d
want to be the reason we split up and because he came out as gay two months before the en
the school year in 2023. That made it clear we needed to get all of us out of TX if we wanted
stability and safety for the whole family.

The decisions being made by families in this anti-trans, red state world, are impossibly hard. \n
find political safety, but lose our local safety nets from our daily grind. The friends and allies v
found in our struggles. The family that accepted our kids for who they are. We lost of all of th
build these new lives.

And when we get where we are going, it's hard to rebuild that kind of community. When people tell us about our moves, when we do find those support groups in our new homes, we suck the life out of the room when we share our story and that sucks, too.

We've been in WA for a year. Our credit is in the toilet. And we continue to struggle with repairing our finances. It's taken this long to fully accept our new home, and to accept that this is where our kids will graduate high school. That these are indeed our new roots.

God Bless anyone else going through this.

And if you're reading this and contemplating your family's next decision about moving or traveling for medical access, and you live in north TX or know someone who is in that area and in need of help, please tell them to go follow TENT on social media, and that there's a small but helpful group from the North Texas TRANSPORTATION Network out there that can help in some small way with the costs for moving or traveling.

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2 replies

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