I knew that I was different from a very young age. Growing up in Texas with immigrant parents & in a poor immigrant community, my perspective of the world was limited. The first time I kissed a girl, we were hidden in her closet at midnight, scared of being found by her parents. It was a beautiful & deeply sad moment. A memory that should be cute and awkward and funny is tainted forever because of it was clouded by our terror of being found out to be "wrong". We weren't wrong.

I'm a fantastic actor. My greatest performance, to date, was convincing those around me that I was heterosexual & cisgender. I hid my feelings, my personhood, & my joy for over a decade. When I learned the word transgender, after I had spent my whole life convinced that I was completely alone, I was beside myself with grief over my life so far & utter joy at the life I now had the chance to start living. My family didn't accept that I wasn't their daughter. I attempted suicide multiple times. One attempt landed me in a medically induced coma. When I woke up, to the surprise of even my doctors, my family told me how happy they were that their "little girl" came back to them. I kept trying to kill myself, I ran away from home, my parents threw me out & my guardians in North Dakota took me in. They didn't accept me either, so I went back to acting.

Three years later, at 18, I was homeless, traumatized from years of abuse, & **still transgender**. No beating took it out of me, no vitriolic words could stem who I was, lack of support couldn't make me a different person. Now that I have transitioned socially, medically, & legally, I am three years free from a suicide attempt, two years sober, & finally at home within myself. I have friends. I have a place to live. I have pets. I am alive & happy to be so.

The attack on transgender rights all across the country will not stop people from being transgender. Centuries of history have shown, time and time again, from book burnings to murders to genocides, that transgender people cannot be subdued into nonexistence. Even if every single transgender person were to die tomorrow, more would be born the next day. The outcome of bills like these is that transgender people are made to suffer more for existing, suicide rates of transgender people increase dramatically, & the murders of transgender people are normalized.

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention has classified the actions of lawmakers within the GOP against the LGBTQ+ community as a movement driven by fascistic, genocidal ideology. Transgender people, whether adults or children, deserve the freedom to identify as themselves & to seek treatments that are deemed appropriate by World Health Organization, the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, & other unbiased medical organizations that rely on science to determine the proven safest treatments that lead to the proven best outcomes for people. Transgender people do not pose **any** risk to non-transgender people. Transgender people, very simply, wish to live our lives, as ourselves, in peace.

The push to disallow changes to birth certificates is ridiculous & deeply discriminatory. It creates a necessity for transgender people to be outed whenever we need a new ID, a new job, a new apartment, federal assistance programs, etc.

I am the father of my child. It hurts no one for me to say that & for legal paperwork to reflect it. It helps no one to deny it – in fact, it only hurts me to deny I am.