

# Senator Klobuchar

At a very young age, my parents and I had to become activists out of necessity. When I was ten years old, conservative groups and many Republican legislators in Washington State began to try and repeal gender identity protections established in 2006. In just over a year after I came out as transgender, my family was forced to fight for the next two years to keep anti-discrimination protections in place. It caused my parents a lot of stress and worry about my safety and future for problems that never existed. Much like what is happening today across many states over sports and healthcare.

Even though we heard terrible and untrue opinions and beliefs about people like me, I was surrounded by people who saw possibility and hope in me. I had amazing opportunities to meet people like Jazz Jennings, Dana Simpsons (author and illustrator of 'Phoebe and Her Unicorn' - some of my all time favorite graphic novels), and countless other trans people in my own community. The attacks on my rights actually brought many loving, compassionate, and diverse people into our lives. I quickly had adopted aunts, uncles, and even a grandma who were also transgender. Ironically, the fear of others enriched the love in my own life.

During this time, I even got to meet and become friends with one of my very own heroes, Sarah McBride. Who has also become one of my greatest cheerleaders. A few years later, Sarah became the first openly transgender person elected to a state senate in the United States. She is clearing a path for me, and so many others, to follow.

Meeting Sarah was like meeting my future self. She says meeting me was like meeting her eleven year old self. (Sarah even wrote about this experience in her book, 'Tomorrow Will Be Different.')

We both knew something special happened the day we met. We became each other's possibility models.

As I mentioned in my testimony, the GenderCool Project has also shown me that people care and value transgender and non-binary youth. My fellow Champions inspire me every day. I don't have to go far to find someone like me doing incredible things and changing the world in their own communities. Like with anyone else, positive role models inspire and create more positive role models.

For me, politics and history inspire me to contribute, improve people's lives, and change the future. In the same ways people like Andrea Jenkins, Phillippe Cunningham, Dr. Rachel Levine, and Virginia House of Delegates Danica Roem are doing. Giving testimony is another way of contributing. I actually really enjoyed the hearing. The process was interesting and had purpose that makes sense to me. It may sound weird but I thought the whole thing was fun!

All the scary things said about people like me does not reflect my daily experiences. They don't represent all the amazing trans and non-binary people I know and look up to for inspiration. Because the truth is none of it is true. My hope is to help be one of many who can eliminate fears and misconceptions about non-binary and transgender youth by being visible and sharing my story. If I'm lucky, I can be someone else's possibility model. As my mom recently told me, "Stella, you are someone else's Sarah McBride."

Thank you so much Senator Klobuchar for the opportunity to answer your question.  
It's such an honor to be asked.

Sincerely,  
Stella Keating