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To:	Shane McFarland; Madelyn Scales-Harris; Jami Averwater; Austin Maxwell; Bill Shacklett; Kirt Wade; Shawn Wright
Subject:	[EXTERNAL]- Regarding Boro Pride
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Good evening! My name is Katelin Wyman. I graduated from MTSU two years ago. I moved into town for college from out of state, and by the end of those four years I considered Murfreesboro more of a home to me than the state I grew up in. It's a very special place in my heart - standing on my own two feet allowed me to grow as a person in ways I couldn't while living at home, I was involved in a community for the first time, and I made lifelong friends. I found an incredible church. I overcame my fear of public speaking. I became president of a club.

It is also the place where I first realized I was gay.

I won't go into how, because it is just not very interesting (can you remember when you first realized you *liked* someone?), but the fact that I can tell you that at all is a miracle in itself. Before college, I never felt I could discuss political topics on even ground. Attempts at talking about important issues good faith - not arguing - were either discarded due to my age or met with a wave of anger I didn't understand. Not just on LGBTQ issues, either; I tried discussing everything from social programs to education to what color the President's tie was. Only after moving to Murfreesboro could I talk about current bills and politicians with people of all backgrounds without feeling like I was walking through a field of landmines. It wasn't just allowed, it was encouraged! That healthy atmosphere for talking things through is one of my favorite things about Murfreesboro. So, I hope you all will humor this for just a little while.

Murfreesboro is where I attended my first Pride - I think I'd just started my sophomore year. I was still very scrawny and gangly, which was not helped at all by the enormous plastic lei I'd been given upon arrival and the rainbow heart tank top that was far too big, despite being the smallest size I could find online. I estimated it to be around eighty billion degrees outside.

Here is how my first Pride went:

- Arrive to the main square excited and extremely nervous. Everyone - anyone - would be able to look at me in public and know I was gay. Irrational fear of someone contacting my parents in Kentucky somehow.
- Notice that the square is not at all like I had thought Pride events were. I'd prayed it wasn't the barely-contained party I'd imagined it to be from the news. With a local band playing to a scattering of tent booths advertising small businesses, health foundations, local churches, and insurance, it felt much more like a farmer's market or a summer event a library would host at the park.
- Purchased a tall palm tree-shaped bottle containing the best fruit tea I have ever had in my life.
- Chatted to friends while looking at sidewalk chalk.
- Witnessed a gaggle of children have a hula-hoop contest.
- Obtained a lot of buttons and those plasticky bracelets advertising churches. Later went on to attend one of them for years.

Entered a raffle. Won two decorative rainbow pillows. I don't think anyone has ever been as delighted to get cheap little pillows as I was then. I'd look at them in my room and feel a little emotional. I'd hide them deep where they could never be found when my parents would visit.
- Head back to campus. Go to bed smiling, having learned that being gay did not mean I had to live in tortured silence, nor did it mean I had to figure out how to become some wild partying twentysomething. I could just...have a nice day outside.

I read that Boro Pride was recently banned on the grounds of "conduct and speech of an explicitly sexual nature." Remembering how the event went that year and subsequent years, I'm wondering if the wires got crossed somewhere.

The Boro Pride I know is a very PG-rated event, complete with balloons and a booth with picture books from the library. No one was dressed inappropriately, despite the sweltering heat. If the issue is regarding its focus on the LGBTQ, please know that the event is no more inappropriate regarding interpersonal relationships than a pack of elementary school Valentine's cards. You do not have to like, agree with, or approve of gay topics, but to call Boro Pride explicitly sexual is not based on facts or evidence.

I would encourage you to seel more firsthand accounts from those that have attended Boro Pride, as well as to contact the committee in charge of the event and have a frank discussion on what Boro Pride entails. It may not mean very much to you one way or the other, but for me and countless others, Pride represents the best of Murfreesboro's community. It provides a weekend to forget about politics and party lines and all the little things dividing us from each other and just have a pleasant time sipping tea in the sun.

Thank you for letting me ramble.

Katie Wyman