

# Fighting for our future

*An open letter to Texas politicians in response to recent legislation*

Dear Texas politicians,  
Be afraid.

Our parents and grandparents may have put you in power, but we are the ones who can take it away from you. We are the ones with the power.

By we, I mean the next generation of voters.

A generation who knows what it's like to fear going to school every day. A generation who has been robbed not only of the rights to their bodies but identities as well.

In six months I will be eligible to vote. I know that when I cast my ballot it is going to go to someone who will make a difference in the challenges that affect my life. And I know it won't go towards the politicians who created those challenges in the first place.

If you want my vote, along with the votes of my peers, you must address the widespread issues faced by high school students. Issues that have made us feel unsafe, unseen and unappreciated by lawmakers.

One thing universal throughout my generation is the fear of school shootings.

This is especially prevalent in Texas, which according to U.S. News and World Report, has one of the least restrictive firearm laws and has consistently held the highest number of school shootings for the past 10 years.

Texas has an open carry policy meaning there are no regulations on who can buy and carry a firearm. While a license is required to use a handgun, the laws that decide who can receive a license are very lax with little consideration for mental health or who has access to the weapon.

Gun proponents will argue that guns provide protection to

their owners, yet if that's the case, the question becomes who deserves that protection? From whom was the man that killed 19 students and two teachers in the Uvalde shooting trying to protect himself? And were those 21 lives worth the "protection" of the one man who shot them? By signing pro gun laws, you are signing away the lives of hundreds of your fellow Texans. That blood will be on your hands.

Not only is it children, but women who are dying under your laws. Making abortions illegal won't stop them from happening: it just halts the regulation of safe practices.

According to a study done by the Guttmacher Institute, abortion rates in countries where the procedure is illegal are not significantly different than those in countries where it is legal.

The difference is that illegal abortions are less safe with higher risk of death or complications. The result can be equally devastating for the women who are forced into parenthood.

According to a study done by the British Medical Journal, 75% of women who receive an abortion are below the poverty line and the 12% of the poorest women make up 50% of abortion cases.

Becoming pregnant often means the end of the pregnant woman's education. That mother now has a child to watch, less time to study, another mouth to feed and more bills to pay.

Her priority shifts from learning to parent to struggling to survive and the generational cycle of poverty starts all over again.

Worst of all, you have tried to tell our generation who

we are. According to NBC, nearly 240 laws targeting the LGBTQ+ community were filed in America within only the first three months of 2022. While not many of the proposed laws have made it past the court, its upsetting that so many attempts have been made by politicians to minimize the rights of my peers.

The rights of the trans community have been an especially large target by Texas politicians. Earlier this year, Gov. Greg Abbott wrote a letter to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services asking them to investigate parents providing children receiving gender affirming medical care, calling it a form of "child abuse." The personal lives of children should be of no interest to a grown man, yet alone be publicized as a political issue.

Freedom of speech and freedom of religion are our constitutional rights. Shouldn't freedom of self-expression, whether that be who you love or how you identify, be protected not persecuted by the laws of Texas?

If you continue to tell us who we are, if you continue to tell women they are second-class citizens and if you continue to prioritize firearms over the lives of your children and fellow citizens, then your priorities don't match ours.

If you want our votes, you have to address our needs and protect our rights.

My solution is to start early. Come speak at our school. Show that you hear us, that you see us.

Because if you acknowledge us, you will be doing not only us, but yourself a favor.

Sincerely,  
Evie Barnard

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