Teens Lobbying for HIV Issues Get Insulted by House Staffer's Mass Email

"There are cross-dressers in the building," warned a message to teen pages regarding which restrooms they should use.

April 11, 2017

About 70 LGBTQ teenagers headed to their state capital of Oklahoma City to lobby for HIV awareness, education and funding, but they ended up making national headlines for a completely different—and unwanted—reason. When made aware of the group's presence in the capitol, a staffer for House Speaker Charles McCall sent an email to teen pages warning: "there are cross-dressers in the building."

As the Tulsa World reports, the email went on to say, "As per the Speaker's office, Pages are being allowed access to the ladies restroom across from 401, for today. Again, there are cross-dressers in the building."

The LGBTQ lobbyists were organized by Oklahomans for Equality. "Never have I felt so unsupported," Pickles Lee, 18, a senior at Owasso High School, told the newspaper. "This email sort of escalated everything."

Until that email, the lobbying day had been uneventful.

"We came down to the capitol to talk about laws," said Ella Gambino, 17, a Union High School senior. "To be referred to as cross-dressers is something you say as an insult."

Speaker McCall issued a statement saying a House staffer sent the email without his input and that he did not condone the remarks in the email.

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