

PRESS RELEASE

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askwhy5died.com

VERMONT FILMMAKER ARRESTED AT PENNSYLVANIA STATEHOUSE

**Five Transgender Youth Suicides in Lancaster County in the last 18 months
prompts filmmaker to implicate State Senator Ryan Aument**

VT Filmmaker seeks Aument's resignation as PA Majority Whip

(April 29, 2024, HARRISBURG PA) — A Vermont filmmaker was arrested at the Pennsylvania statehouse on Monday protesting against a single state senator.

Filmmaker James Lantz, 62, of Burlington, Vermont, said he was there to implicate State Senator Ryan Aument in the suicides of five Transgender youth from Aument's home county of Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

The five youth who were mostly in their teens, ranged in age from 12 to 22 years old; all identified as Trans or Non-Binary and died by suicide in the last 18 mos.

As Majority Whip of the Republican-led Pennsylvania State Senate, Senator Ryan Aument sponsored, supported, and pushed a number of legislations that were referred to as anti-Trans and anti-LGBTQ; as well as bills that were called book bans that singled out the LGBTQ community, and additional legislation said to be Pennsylvania's version of the Don't Say Gay bill.

Lantz said he learned of the suicides while researching a film project and was shocked to learn that so little attention had been directed at the deaths of so many Trans youth in a single county in a short period of time. He said that Senator Aument had ignored numerous requests for comment.

Lantz said, “By sponsoring and loudly promoting anti-Trans and anti-LGBTQ legislations to Pennsylvanians, State Senator Ryan Aument has licensed and encouraged bigotry, hate and bullying against a very small group of Transgender and Non-Binary kids. Senator Aument’s bills encouraged anti-Trans rhetoric in communities, schools and families across the state, leaving LGBTQ teens feeling *even more* isolated and *even more* alone, amplifying existing anxieties.”

“Unfortunately, these five kids in Senator Aument’s home county of Lancaster paid the ultimate price.”

On a flyer that Lantz passed out at the statehouse on Monday, he called on State Senator Ryan Aument to:

- Make a public statement of condolence to the families of these kids
- Recognize that [Senator Aument] and the GOP are culpable in these suicides
- Resign as Majority Whip of the Pennsylvania State Senate

Lantz, a father and grandfather who came out as gay two years ago, doesn’t consider himself to be an activist and said this was the first time he’d ever protested or been arrested. As a disabled filmmaker who is in ongoing treatment for a rare cancer, Lantz can no longer run, relies on a cane to walk, and — for the statehouse protest — carried a letter from his doctor for the police (attached).

At the statehouse on Monday, Lantz wore a white shirt emblazoned with a Trans flag and large black words saying ASK WHY 5 DIED.com. **[end]**

Addendum:

Names, ages, and death dates of the five Lancaster County Trans and Non-Binary Youth:

Ashton Clatterbuck, 22, February 27, 2024

River Olmsted, 17, October 16, 2023

Theadora "Thea" Cassidy, 18, September 22, 2023

Brayden Snyder, 15, October 25, 2022

Robyn Bittenbender, 12, September 10, 2022



April 15, 2024

Patient Name: James M Lantz

DOB: 

To Whom It May Concern:

James M Lantz is a patient under my care at the Mass General Cancer Center. He has a diagnosis of a rare cancer called MPNST and has undergone significant treatment including multiple surgeries and radiation. This has resulted in significant bone fragility which puts Mr Lantz at increased risk of bone fractures. He also experiences sensory deficits that result in limited mobility, rendering him a significant fall risk.

Please avoid any physical contact or altercation with Mr Lantz.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

