We will not let hate win.

"Thank you, Mr. President," she began, her voice steady despite the storm raging inside her. "Yesterday, I awoke to the unsettling news that the senator from the 22nd District had targeted me in a fundraising email. Accusations of grooming and sexualizing children were attached to my name. At first, I pondered the reason behind this unexpected attack. Then, it struck me. I pose a significant threat to their hollow, hateful agenda. I stand as a parent, refuting the claim that the rights of parents are violated when we support marginalized children. In response, they seek to marginalize and dehumanize me. Label me a groomer, link me to pedophilia, accuse me of burdening children with guilt over slavery because they're white.

"Let me introduce you to who I truly am," she continued. "I was raised in a devout family, active in our church. I sang in the choir. My mother taught CCD. But we learned the hard way that sometimes, appearances matter more than actions. Our priest rebuked my mother for being a divorcee for not attending every Sunday mass. He didn't see her commitment to serve at the local soup kitchen with me by her side. We learned early on that true faith was about community, acknowledging our privilege and blessings, and serving others, especially those marginalized or less fortunate.

"I stand here today, also influenced by Father Ted Hesburgh, president of the University of Notre Dame. He was a man who understood the power of his position, his white privilege, his faith and used it to stand alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the civil rights movement, offering protection and allyship, fighting against injustice.

"I am a straight, white, Christian, married, suburban mom," she affirmed, her voice growing stronger. "I want my daughter to know that she is loved, supported, and seen, no matter who she becomes. I want her to be empathetic, curious, and kind. I want her and every child in this state to understand that they are not responsible for the past but hold the power to shape the future.

"I hope that every child feels seen, heard, and supported. I reject the notion that teaching children about the reality of slavery, redlining, or systemic racism equates to making white children feel guilty or responsible. I stand here today to say that we will not let hate win. I know who I am. I understand what faith and service mean and what they demand of us in such times. So, call me what you will. I hope your slanderous email brought in a few dollars. I hope it helped you sleep well last night. But know this: We will not let hate win."