

I am so honored, touched, and surprised(!) to learn of having been selected for this year's Essential Voice Award. Thank you so much to you and the rest of the National Safe Place Network. It is incredibly meaningful to me, especially coming from such a dedicated group of advocates and service professionals. Very important parts of my journey into public service have been influenced by you and others in the NSPN family as far back as my adolescence. You helped me pick out my clothes for my first meetings on the Hill, you made sure I knew you had my back, and, then and over the years, you made me feel like my voice had purpose in this world. More importantly, you helped me better understand how to lift up the voices of others who are less likely to get heard. For me, this award is about *those* voices. I am deeply grateful for all you do to help make communities better, safer, and more empowering for all of our nation's young people.