

Submitter: Akia Woods

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

We need to have expert counseling for people of all ages, not simply “affirming care”. people in crisis often don’t have a clue what the underlying issues are that are causing their urge to transition. Detransitioners are real, and in hugely growing numbers, a uniquely traumatized and rapidly growing population with complex needs. One of their most common grievances is that when they initially sought counseling for their gender related distress, no one questioned them. Mental health professionals simply “affirmed” their gender identity and ushered them along a path of social and medical transition, without exploring their reasons for wanting to transition or properly assessing their psychiatric comorbidities, trauma history, family dynamics, or internalized homophobia. As a result, they are now suffering mental and physical anguish daily, including pelvic pain, surgical scar pain, vaginal atrophy, infertility, inability to orgasm, inability to breastfeed, urinary tract infections, metabolic and endocrine disruption, permanently altered voices, male pattern baldness, unwanted facial hair, osteoporosis, and increased likelihood of cardiovascular disorders and early dementia, as well as a very likely shortened lifespan. All of these ailments place them at increased risk of depression and suicide. These vulnerable patients were victims of therapists who neglected their duty to ask questions, evaluate comorbidities, encourage self-acceptance, and support healthy long term decision making.

The existing law, ORS 675.850, already makes it difficult for parents to find appropriate help for their children. Parents state it’s been impossible to find a therapist willing to explore the underlying reasons for their child’s sudden transgender identification. Adolescent therapists are currently operating under pressure to steer clear of anything that could possibly be deemed so-called “conversion therapy.” But the traditional approach of watchful waiting, which gives teens time to discover themselves without making life-altering decisions, results in desistance rates approximating 90%, as the process of going through puberty, coming to terms with one’s sexuality, and finding one’s place in society, naturally resolves almost all gender dysphoria.

The proposed amendment would make this situation worse by depriving vulnerable adults, as well as minors, of comprehensive treatment for underlying issues such as sexual trauma, which can drive the desire to be rid of sexual body parts. This bill declares a state of emergency. But there is no emergency of “conversion therapy” happening right now in the state of Oregon, and you will be hard pressed to find anyone who has truly been harmed by a therapist gently questioning their thoughts and choices. Oregon’s true emergency the lack of proper exploratory therapy for

distressed, vulnerable young people. This legislation will make that worse. Please, please vote No on HB 2458.