

Submitter: Kara Huntermoon

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

I am very concerned about two aspects of this bill. One is the declaration of an emergency. It is debatable whether the public peace, health, and safety are at risk due to passage of or rejection of this bill. It seems to me that declaring an emergency is a way for a certain group of people to push their agenda in a way that excludes public debate on the topic. The declaration of emergency seems to be based in urgent emotions, rather than in verifiable emergency conditions or widespread current harm.

My second concern is on banning certain therapeutic methods for adults. Adults have the ability to walk away from a therapist who is not working for them, and hire a different therapist. In today's charged social environment around gender identity, people hold many different viewpoints on the topic of gender identity. Therapists deserve the ability to use their best thinking on how to approach this topic. There is a need for therapists who will do more than just nod and bow and write a prescription for hormones and surgery. People who are questioning their gender identity or sexuality deserve safe spaces in which to talk intimately about the reasons behind their questions, including exploring any early trauma or family history that might be contributing to their current desires.

Increasing numbers of people are now "detransitioning" away from a trans gender identity and re-identifying with the gender associated with their biological sex. Many of these people are deeply hurt that therapists and mental health professionals gave them only "gender affirming" therapy as described in this bill under section (B) "Conversion therapy does not mean." They wish someone had assisted them in exploring more deeply the reasons behind their desire for surgery and hormones before rubber stamping (or even encouraging) their medical and surgical body alterations. They now have to live with permanent changes to their bodies, including infertility, the removal of healthy body tissues, increased body hair, increased baldness, changes in vocal tone, and other permanent changes caused by "gender affirming" care.

I support adults in using "gender affirming" medical technologies when that is truly what is right for them. I oppose a bill that would criminalize mental health professionals for inquiring into their patients' process around gender identity. Everyone deserves time and attention to explore the reasons for their permanently life-altering decisions, preferably before those decisions are irreversibly made. I believe that passing this bill would potentially lead to lawsuits against the State of Oregon from detransitioning people who find out that Oregon actually prohibits

mental health professionals from assisting them in questioning their motives before making permanent body modifications.

I am a gender-nonconforming person. If this bill was passed, some of the therapeutic assistance I received from licensed mental health professionals would become illegal. That therapeutic assistance helped me deeply understand myself and fully accept myself. It helped me heal early trauma. I would be horrified if my beloved and helpful mental health professionals lost their license or their job or received other legal sanctions because a different client found their methods to be not useful to them in their own gender identity journey. That is what this bill would support.

This gender-nonconforming person urges you to vote NO on HB 2458.