

Submitter: Rachel H

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

I am a parent of a 16-year-old daughter with gender dysphoria. She has autism and has always felt different than other girls. When she was 13, she started her period and HATED it and was uncomfortable with other physical changes in her body. A few months later she witnessed a sexual assault, and as she had learned online about the ability to change her gender, she decided she would rather be a boy. I understand why, but it has been impossible to find a therapist who could help her explore why she might be uncomfortable with her female body, as once she declared a trans identity, it would be considered conversion therapy. I am horrified that social policies have made it impossible for her to get the help she needs.

I am concerned that this bill banning "conversion therapy" lumps sexual orientation and gender identity together as if they are the same issue. Unfortunately, many policy makers accept the current social view that being transgender is similar to being gay; that feelings do not change over a lifetime. It is convenient to lump gender identity issues with sexual orientation issues, but they are very different. While the majority of adolescents who report that they have same-sex or both-sex attractions do not change their minds by reaching adulthood, studies show that the vast majority of children who suffer gender dysphoria, if not affirmed, DO grow out of it by adulthood. As a society, we need to slow down and help those with gender dysphoria in other ways before jumping straight to affirmation leading to medical transition. There are so many more things we can do to help people, especially adolescents, learn to cope with anxieties and become more comfortable with their growing teenage bodies. Regrettably, the way this "conversion therapy" ban is worded makes it nearly impossible for therapists to help children explore their feelings about their gender in any way other than affirming a new identity.

This new bill creates a new problem. Many young adults who transitioned during adolescence over the last 5-10 years (during the time that transition became a trend among teens rather than adult men) are now desisting and regretting their choices to medically transition. The ranks of detransitioners are growing (over 43,000 members on one Reddit thread where you can read their stories: <https://www.reddit.com/r/detrans/>), and the new wording in this bill will make it very difficult for the growing numbers of detransitioners (now seeking help to understand their underlying desire to transition or for help with medical and emotional problems caused by transitioning) to receive the help they need.

I have two adult daughters who are lesbian, and I am grateful that over the last decade awareness has grown and social policies have made them feel safe and

accepted. I am grateful that we have protections in place to prevent bullying and discrimination against those who identify as transgender. But as policy makers and parents, we need to be aware that sexual orientation and gender identity are two completely separate issues. We need to protect our youth from dangerous and permanent medical or surgical treatments for what could be temporary problems. I believe that in 10 years our society will view the current trend of adolescent gender transition as a failed social experiment to solve complex mental health issues. In the meantime, please protect our ability to get therapeutic help by exploring all options for treating gender dysphoria, not just blind affirmation.