

Submitter: Debra Koutnik MD

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2002

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Goodwin and Nelson, and Members of the Committee:

I urge you to enact HB 2002.

This Bill guarantees the rights of transgender individuals to receive age-appropriate medically necessary healthcare and helps rural Oregonians receive equal access to that care.

The people opposing this Bill are reciting lies and misinformation because they are threatened by societal change. But the fact is that our societal and cultural expectations do change over time. When Martin Luther King was assassinated, only 20% of people “approved” of inter-racial marriage. Today, it’s almost 95%. Twenty years ago, only one-third of Americans “approved” of same-sex marriage. Today, over 70% of Americans do.

The same is true for our experience of gender identity and sexual orientation. The number of adults identifying as LGBT has doubled in every generation. There is no sudden onset of gender expansive youth. Non-binary people have existed in every culture around the world from the time of recorded human history. In the same way that the percent of left handed people increased once we stopped trying to force people to be right handed, more people are expressing their gender non-conforming identity today because it is safer, in some parts of our society, to do so.

One myth repeated by the opposition is that age appropriate medically necessary gender affirming care is “abuse and mutilation” of children. That is a lie. There are no medications or medical procedures of any kind used for transgender children prior to puberty. PERIOD.

Another often spewed myth by people opposing this bill is that “the government,” doctors, educators, and parents are “forcing gender transition” on children. This is a lie. Affirming a child’s gender expression does not “cause” them to become transgender. But not allowing them to express who they are does cause children and teens to be depressed and even suicidal. The pathway for youth who have entered puberty to receive age appropriate medically necessary gender affirming healthcare is a lengthy, thoughtful, and individualized process that considers the multiple needs of the youth, evolves over time in response to those needs, and nearly all of the time, includes parents/guardians.

The completely unfounded panic that children in large numbers are receiving gender affirming health care without parent permission is simply false. For early pubertal youth and for adolescents, at least one parent or guardian almost always provides consent. Unfortunately, there are some cases where it is not safe for a child to remain with their parents. Sadly, multiple studies demonstrate that gender non-conforming children suffer 2-3 times higher rates of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse from their family members.

At a time when Republican legislators across the country are quite literally trying to legislate trans people out of existence, HB 2002 is absolutely essential to protect the rights of all gender non-conforming Oregonians, let them know that they have a voice, they are heard, they matter, and they belong.

I urge you to pass HB 2002 and send that message to all Oregonians of every gender identity.

Respectfully,  
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Member of Oregon Pediatric Society  
Fellow in American Academy of Pediatrics