

I am a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and a lesbian. I oppose Bill 2002 for numerous reasons, some of which I will address here.

First, it is vital we separate Trans from Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual. Sexual orientation and the rights won by LGB people to not be discriminated against because of *same-sex attraction* is not at all the same as the variety of experiences involved for trans people. The etiology of body dysmorphia/dysphoria have not been fully researched and what we do know is extremely limited. Given this, treatments are also new, experimental, and not rooted in any modality commonly used for treatment. For example, if this is a mental disorder, therapeutic techniques of open curiosity, exploration, exploring the distress experienced by challenging any cognitive distortions that exacerbate distress, and creating a space for therapists and clients to wrestle with difficult life experiences, emotions, and reactions would take place. This bill is proposing that we do none of that. This bill is proposing we do not do therapy. Further, if this is a medical condition, there would be diagnostic criteria to justify life altering drugs and surgery, including the removal of healthy body parts, which happens in no other medical treatment. This simply does not exist. It is solely the stated experience of “feeling” a certain way that prompts therapists to not do therapy and doctors to not practice medicine based on the Hippocratic Oath to do no harm.

Further, comorbidities, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder/Complex Developmental Trauma, Depression, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, and Autism Spectrum Disorder are extremely common among those who present with body dysmorphia/dysphoria and should be thoroughly explored, processed, and treated *before* other permanent physical changes are made. It needs to be noted that nearly ALL children who are “affirmed” go on to further social and medical transition, yet prior to the current practice of affirming, most children/teens would desist and were likely gay or lesbian. So what is being destroyed with “affirming” gender identity is the gay community. Homophobia/internalized homophobia are other aspects worthy of exploration before simply “affirming” gender identity, especially given many gay and lesbian people are gender non conforming, particularly given they are same-sex attracted.

Additionally, historically most people we now call trans were older, heterosexual males likely exhibiting autogynophilia or gay men in drag, yet currently the highest rate for transitioning is among preteen and teen girls with nearly a 5000% increase in the last 10 years. This is a shift from adults to children/teens. This raises questions both to the change in demographics and the dramatic increase, yet this is not questioned or explored and this bill attempts to further disregard this anomaly and inhibit therapeutic or social exploration of the dramatic emergence of this phenomenon. Further, given the similarities of body dysmorphia/dysphoria and self-harm and eating disorders and their prevalence among young females, due in part to their struggle with their changing bodies living as female in a misogynist culture, it behooves us to not “affirm” trans any more than we would affirm self-harm or an eating disorder. It places all the blame for what is wrong on the bodies of girls and

not on the culture or social atmosphere where hyper-sexualization of women, rigid expectations for female bodies to be thin and sexually appealing to males, and still, even with the progress we've made, is quite homophobic.

Given "affirmation" is a choice in direction rather than open curiosity about the complex factors that can arise during adolescence and likely change, most children and teens who are "affirmed" go on to more experimental, long-term, sometimes unchangeable "treatments" that can leave them unable to have children, breastfeed, or have other ongoing pain or health issues. This is not just about easing the present discomfort of children and teens experiencing distress and pointing to their bodies as the problem. It is the responsibility of adults to know that distress comes and goes, self-acceptance of oneself as we are is at the root of well-being—not changing ourselves, especially physically, to match an idea we have about how 'when this happens, I'll be happy'; this is completely contrary to the research on happiness.

Finally, the increase in the number of people detransitioning and their stories cannot be ignored. The variety of experiences they have to share, the regret, the medical complications, the heartbreak, and the recognition of the lack of maturity and brain maturation to understand the long-term effects of transition must be heard. This bill would erase the voices of these people and the harm they have suffered because of the hubris of others to "know" for certain that "affirming" is the one and only correct "treatment" for gender-questioning people. A society that does not protect its most vulnerable is a very sick society. This bill would make our society sicker.