

Submitter: January Littlejohn

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

I am a licensed mental health counselor in Florida and a mother of three. My teen daughter started experiencing distress over her sex at age 13 after three other friends at school also started identifying as transgender. My daughter expressed no previous signs of gender confusion in her childhood. Like many adolescents experiencing sudden confusion over their sex, my daughter had other co-occurring mental health issues. We elicited the help of a mental health counselor to help her explore and resolve these issues, and we followed a path of loving support and watchful waiting. After three years, she has now desisted and is thriving physically and emotionally. If her counselor would have been prevented from exploring the underlying causes of her distress and confusion related to her sex, my daughter may have gone down a medical path that we now know was unnecessary. Moreover, lack of therapeutic exploration would have left the true source of her emotional pain undiscovered and unresolved.

Exploratory therapy is not conversion therapy. Exploratory therapy is an ethical and professionally appropriate psychological treatment for persons struggling with anorexia, body image issues and body dysmorphia to help them feel comfortable in their body. For many adolescents, gender dysphoria is no different and should be treated in the same manner so a therapist can help the child discover and resolve the true source of her pain. Please do not pass this bill and rob children and teens of the opportunity to pursue the full range of therapeutic support or the potential to become comfortable in their own bodies. Please do not pass HB 2458.