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On Behalf Of: Can I Get a Witness

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2458

I'm a child of the 50's. A 'Tomboy'. I grew up with LIFE Magazine in the home as well as The Los Angeles Times and National Geographic. Walter Cronkite's news reports and PBS television were part of our normal family life. But I was far from 'normal' because I realized I was not interested in ever being with a boy or a man. I decided that I was actually a boy trapped in a girl's body and so I dreamed of becoming a 'real' boy who would become a man some day.

My parents were both teachers and I had an older, extremely feminine sister. We were raised to think critically and encouraged to question the status quo. My parents were Democrats, Bi-lingual and against any form of ethnic hatred, anti-Semitism or racist attitudes and they proved this through volunteerism in our community in several social justice causes.

But at age 6 when I asked my father if I could marry a girl when I grew up, both of them became concerned. My father became more quick-to-anger with me and my mother became more and more frustrated at any friends I did hang out with. With an older sister who was largely embarrassed by her boyish younger sister, parents who tried to force me to wear skirts and dresses, and a secret love letter to a girl that my mother discovered in my room, I lost myself in going to the movies whenever I could.

I fantasized about having a great job as a private eye and having a wife who had some cool job and we'd travel the world. By 10 years old I was just waiting for a chance to prove everybody wrong about how life had to be. Then just 2 years later in 1967, I came across the autobiography of a man who traveled to Denmark for sex surgeries to turn him into a woman. I read it in-between the stacks of our public library – not at home – and my imagination went wild. Reading that book was akin to a child in 2009 getting exposed to sexual content on Tumblr at way-too-young-in-age.

I found other provocative and mature sexual questioning materials and decided right then and there to pursue a path like Christine Jorgensen did in Denmark.

Four years later I came out as a lesbian at age 16 and had many love affairs with girls my own age and later with similar aged women as well. I still always had in the back of my mind this idea that I was really transsexual though and in my early 30's sought out a therapist I thought would surely help me in my quest for the elusive 'authenticity' I felt I'd never had in my female sexed body. Well, I found a great therapist alright, but not one I knew I needed. She was a butch identified lesbian woman in her early 50's and I thought I had found my ticket for an unknown, exciting future ready to forge out a plan with someone who would help me put it into play. But what came out of her mouth in our very first session shocked me. After revealing my lifelong desire to 'become a man', she responded with: "You're not a man, you're never gonna be a man. You're a lovely butch young woman who needs to learn to love herself and I hope I can help you to do that."

I was crushed but KNEW she was giving it to me straight. I stuck with her for 6 months and we had about 10 sessions. We talked about so many things in-depth, she questioned my motives, probed decisions and conclusions I'd come to, and all the while she brought up the concept of *consequences*. Through all the encouragement to be thoughtful, to slow down and think critically again as I'd grown up with - that lifelong doubting left my body as I learned more about who I really was and what I had to offer not just in intimate relationship with other women, but to the world. Her challenging me so that I could *get there* saved my life.

I'm writing all this autobiographical content because I want you to understand that if I were that same girl, teen or young adult navigating the trajectory of my life in 2023, I would have had exactly the opposite result trying to work with a talk therapist today. Upon my first visit I likely would have been ushered towards the nearest Planned Parenthood to get my testosterone prescription and then fast-tracked for a double mastectomy and potentially a phalloplasty. At 68 years old now, my bones would have become brittle, blood thickened so much that I'd be on blood thinners, a bald head would replace my naturally thick hair, and my speaking voice would be similar to that of a teenaged boy whose vocal chords struggle to not sound like a toy box croaking after one cranks the handle.

House Bill 2458 is a bill made to shorten lives – not save them. It forces the profession of talk therapy into the box of a cookie-cutter template for crushing spirits, not allowing them to grow. And at the very least, HB 2458 means to create medical patients for life as the social contagion of ‘gender’ as an ideology dictates compliance to a 1950’s stereotype of what places dangerous stereotypes onto women, girls, men and boys. These ‘boxes of compliance’ that HB 2458 would impose on talk therapists is like placing a gag across their mouths by no longer being able to pursue the healing of clients their clients

I vehemently OPPOSE HB 2458 and hope that you will follow suit.

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