

February 13, 2023

To the Oregon State Legislature:

I am writing to oppose Oregon HB2458, as a mom in South Carolina with a previously trans-identified beautiful 16-year-old daughter. Let me share our family's story, just one of thousands out there with common threads...

My daughter "came out" to me as transgender male during a severe mental health crisis that began in spring of 2020 at the end of her 8th grade year. The crisis involved a full year of inpatient and residential admissions for suicidal ideation, anorexia, self-harm, and severe anxiety and depression. My daughter never had any gender-related issues as a child, but was presented with gender ideology in 7th grade when she befriended a girl who had announced she was non-binary. Within 6 months of her friend's announcement, my daughter's hair was cut very short; within a year she was anorexic and self-harming; and by the end of 8th grade was admitted to her first psychiatric hospital for acute suicidal ideation.

She "came out" during admission at a residential eating disorder facility that summer, during which she turned 14. Being a socially liberal person and having taken my kids to Pride events, my daughter knew I would embrace and accept her no matter what. I immediately affirmed her trans identity - although I'd never had a more visceral reaction to anything in my life. I knew my daughter inside and out, and in my gut this didn't feel right at all - but it did present me with a reason for all the distress she was enduring. She must have been transgender deep down all along and I had no idea.

Once her providers knew my daughter had told me she was trans, they all started using her new chosen name and he/him pronouns, her medical records were updated with her male identity, and I was given a host of LGBTQ resources to help my child, including referrals to a gender clinic and endocrinologist. The social worker at the gender clinic informed us about all our options - breast binders, "packers," hormones, surgeries - and happily talked about how gender is fluid and anyone can choose it for themselves. The endocrinologist talked about testosterone, sent us a pamphlet about it, and simply said that both my ex-husband and I would need to sign off before we could proceed - barely anything about side effects.

I personally socially transitioned my child to male - informing our family (causing devastation in the process), friends, providers, the school system, etc. As soon as we got home from the hospital, I took her to get her first "boy" haircut and bought her a complete new wardrobe including boy's underwear. I took her to get-togethers with other "transgender" teens through our local LGBTQ organization and I got together with other moms as well - every one of which had started their children on cross-sex hormones, were changing their kids' names and birth sex in government records, talking about surgeries, etc.

I'm not a religious person, but thank God I never did any of that. About a year and 3 months into my full affirmation of my daughter's transgender identity, I learned I was allowed to question all of this after randomly having coffee with an acupuncturist who was treating my older daughter's migraine condition. She told me how her own 16yo daughter had gone through a period of believing she was transgender, then desisted. She explained how extremely liberal both her husband and her were, but somehow she questioned the trans narrative. She also told me how they had initially gotten involved with the same local LGBTQ

teen organization, that she later brought them some research she had found about how kids can heal from gender dysphoria like they can any other mental health condition, and asked if they would be open to discussing that. They gave her a solid “No” and asked her to leave. They would not allow any discussion of anything other than full “affirmation” of a child’s gender identity and support of medical transition (aka sex changes). That family never went back, and after hearing their story, we never went back either.

I truly had no idea I was allowed to question the “gender affirmative” approach until that day. I thought it was only questioned by conservative bigots and I needed to do everything possible to fight for my transgender child’s rights, although I was dying inside at the loss of my perfect baby girl.

It’s been a year and 1/2 now since that coffee date and starting ALL of my research and involvement with other parents around the world in this space. During this time, I’ve continue to employ resources to help with my daughter’s distress. My beautiful child (an innate perfectionist and high-achieving academic with maladaptive coping skills her whole life) has been diagnosed with ADHD and complex PTSD from her father’s emotional abuse, which she says started around age 10. She has received much therapy – every one of her therapists affirming her gender identity, but focusing on alleviating her PTSD, anxiety and depression. She’s also been seeing an ADHD coach for several months – she now understands how her neurodiversity shaped her perfectionism and insecurities, and she’s learning the executive functioning skills that she lacks naturally and have led to so much academic stress. Of course, I’ve also continued my unwavering love and support of my child.

Today we know my daughter’s trans identity was a coping mechanism for her undiagnosed ADHD and PTSD, and the gender ideology social contagion that presented her with a reason for her distress – she was just trans, and having a sex change would solve everything. Not true. My daughter is upstairs now with no more breast binder, wearing female clothes and undergarments again, growing her hair longer, wearing earrings every day, back to an ideal weight from her anorexia, exercising regularly, and clearly feeling much more comfortable in her skin. She’s back to getting high A’s in every class, is very engaged with the family again, and looking forward to college and a happy life ahead.

She also no longer wishes to medicalize by taking testosterone or having “top surgery,” both of which she adamantly insisted she would do two years ago. If I had not learned about the other side of this debate, and had continued the “gender affirmation” that I felt so passionately about for the first year, my daughter would be on a road to medicalizing a mental health condition that turned out to be resolvable with good resources and a huge amount of love. To be clear – my initial gender affirmation was confirmation that my daughter was actually a boy and needed to have a sex change. This is what “gender affirmation” is.

There are thousands of other parents like me around the world whose beautiful teenagers have been sucked into this social contagion and are trying desperately to get them out in the midst of a politically charged debate where we are seen as transphobic if we don’t “affirm” and help our children have sex changes. Our strong belief is that the “gender affirmative” model, while on the surface seems like the lovely acceptance of a person’s “true self” that we all want, is dangerous at its core and has no place in medical or mental health care guidelines that are supposed to be ethical.

“Conversion therapy” is not a thing for trans-identified kids. Ask any ethical LGB adult – they will tell you to STOP using this term; it is a LIE. Therapy that aims to alleviate a person’s distress is nothing more than that. And if alleviating the distress helps a person become more comfortable with their bodies and not go through a SEX CHANGE, why in the world would anyone oppose that?

Ask yourselves – are you *actually* promoting sex changes for children?

If the answer is yes, pass this bill and live with the consequences. If the answer is no, take out any reference to “conversion therapy” related to gender identity and just let therapists get back to their work of helping alleviate people’s distress.

Thank you for your time in reading my family’s story and consideration of this extremely important matter.

-Mom from SC

Of course, I must remain anonymous. If not, I’m certain to be labeled a transphobe and life destroyed by the hugely funded trans activist organizations that will say my family’s story is a lie and I must be taken out. I’m certain these same organizations will be writing in support of your bill.