

Submitter: Stephanie Atkins

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2002

I believe there are many reasons why this bill should be opposed. First of all, teenagers are still in the midst of puberty and brain development - science has taught us this! The choice of receiving treatment and surgery regarding gender is too great and permanent a decision to put on a minor who does not have the emotional maturity to weigh the pros and cons of such treatment. It is quite common for teenagers to feel out of place and to feel unsure of themselves during the normal changes related to puberty. As parents, it is our job to create a safe space and home where our children feel safe and comfortable to be themselves. It is our job to protect them from many situations and influences they may not be ready for. It is not the job of the government to determine what is best for our children as it does not know them personally. I have listened to many public testimonies of young people who were convinced as minors to go through the treatment and surgeries and now deeply regret it. For them, there is no way of getting back what they have lost. Their bodies are permanently changed. They, more often than not, become infertile and have life-long health problems from the synthetic hormones and surgeries they went through. Also, in circumventing parental rights and authority, you would be telling our children that it is okay to keep secrets from their parents, not unlike sexual predators would when they are trying not to get caught. Our children deserve better care than this "one size fits all" mentality, where questioning identity means we should push drastic and permanent surgeries and treatments on our children. Quite often, teenagers will grow out of this stage of uncertainty about themselves and come to embrace what and who they are naturally. Statistics have shown that this choice does not make them any happier in the long run. Too many still commit suicide after such decisions. It would be more towards the children's interests to have them wait until after age 18 (at least) before we let them make such a life-altering decision on their own. After all, we don't let them get tattoos before age 18 or drink alcohol until age 21. They can't even vote until after their 18th birthday. So why would we even consider that they could have true, informed consent on this matter? Let parents provide for their children what is needed. We know our children best and should always be notified and consulted when concerns arise with regard to our children at school. I hope and pray you make the right choice in regards to this bill: vote no.