

Submitter: Oaklyn Hill

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB2002

I'm an 18 year old transgender kid, and I had top surgery earlier this month. I would like to make it clear that that this procedure, along with all other forms of gender affirming care, is a blessing. I would like to share my story, in hopes to emphasize this.

I have been hiding my chest since 5th grade, building my wardrobe and posture and walk around how I could make it less obvious. I haven't stood straight in years, haven't looked at myself shirtless for even longer. But on March 3rd, I woke up from my top surgery, and put on a shirt. It seems small — I'm sure most people put on their shirts every day without a second thought. For years I've lacked that privilege. I would close my eyes, turn off the lights, face away from mirrors — whatever it took to not see my chest. On March 3rd, I simply put on a shirt. Instinctively I closed my eyes in preparation, but my nurse reminded me I didn't have to do that anymore. My chest, though covered in bandages, was actually mine now. Mine, the one I expected in elementary school and the one I fought for years to get. Now, in the weeks that have followed, I bask in that gift. I dress in my bedroom, the more convenient location, rather than the bathroom that provides nothing beyond a pitch-black space. I don't close my eyes or roll my shoulders inwards, I don't cover my mirror or turn out the lights. Because of top surgery, because of my access to that care, I can get dressed in the mornings with ease.

Placing aside the staggering mental health benefits, the 44% decrease in suicidal ideation for trans people that receive gender affirming care, I would like you to consider for just a moment how powerful putting on a shirt can be. Imagine spending years with a simple, daily task producing enough distress to avoid changing for days at a time. Imagine the helplessness and defeat that floods in every time a five second task requires a dark room and eyes screwed shut tightly enough to see stars. Imagine this for me, the weight of that daily pain, and then imagine being free. Imagine being able to put on a shirt again, something you hadn't seen yourself do in so long you forgot what it looks like. Imagine the relief and elation that would come with that release.

Placing aside the right to bodily autonomy, placing aside the proven benefits of gender affirming care, just take that story. Take my story, a tiny snippet of it, and tell me why access to the care that allowed its happy ending shouldn't be protected. Tell me why multiple therapists confirming my gender dysphoria diagnosis, multiple doctors explaining the risks, and the fully informed consent of me and my guardians isn't enough precautions. Consider my story, truly try to imagine the daily, hourly, strain of being so uncomfortable with your body you can't see it for the mere seconds it takes to change your shirt. Please, consider this all, and tell me why anyone who experiences this should be denied the care I was given.