
2314 Benson Mill Road
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UNFAVORABLE HB283

February 14, 2023

Madame Chair, Sponsors and HGO Committee Members,

I am Emily Tarsell, a licensed mental health therapist with decades of experience counseling children, adolescents and families. **I am testifying to oppose HB 283 because it is too broad and too discriminatory.**

Too Broad:

1. The part of the bill regarding Gender-Affirming Treatment was tacked onto a former bill that was simply about education regarding high blood pressure and blood pressure monitors. That was a reasonable bill about non invasive, cost effective interventions with medical merit. But adding the far reaching language here about a plethora of extremely invasive, extremely costly medical procedures is not reasonable.
2. There are no age limits specified as to when these extraordinary “treatment” measures could take place. Children and adolescents go through all kinds of **stages** of role identification as they grow. Some identifications stick, others do not. Some identifications have more to do with cultural influences than intrinsic self identity. Only time will tell. Yet this bill as written would presumably allow any child or adolescent to have radical surgery or drug “treatment” to conform to some sex identity preference which may or may not be truly intrinsic to self realization. The proposed treatments should definitely not be considered for implementation before the age of 21 when one can make an informed decision from a more mature perspective.

The bill is discriminatory in several ways.

1. The bill would only pay for Gender Affirming Treatment for those on Medicaid. That discriminates against those who have other types of insurance.
2. The bill discriminates against those who may have clinically significant symptoms of distress resulting from body dysphoria but they don’t want to change their sex. For example a male may want to remain male but is clinically significantly distressed about being what he perceives as too small. This bill discriminates against him.
3. This bill discriminates against those who don’t want to change their sex but have body issues which result in medical distress. For example, I know a woman who deals with back and shoulder pain due to the weight of having very large breasts. Insurance will not pay for a breast reduction and neither would this bill.

In summary, because it is our responsibility to protect children/adolescents from possible exploitation and because I support equity and fairness for all people, medically and otherwise, I find this bill too broad and discriminatory. I ask for an UNFAVORABLE vote. Thank you.

Emily Tarsell, LCPC