



Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman
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The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk, Chairman
And Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates

Re: **HB 283** – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Gender-Affirming Treatment (Trans Health Equity Act) – **OPPOSE**

Dear Chairman Pena-Melnyk and Committee Members,

The Maryland Federation of Republican Women strongly opposes HB 283 because it does not protect vulnerable, impressionable children and teens from the permanent damage caused by puberty blockers or cross-sex hormones, and irreversible mutilating surgery to remove their reproductive organs, precluding them later in life from choosing to naturally reproduce – a most basic human desire.

Every person, regardless of biological gender, sexual preference or chosen gender identity, deserves respect and the opportunity to pursue their goals in life. Adults have the right to choose life-altering gender reassignment surgery. However, children need to be protected from powerful drugs such as puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones that render them sterile and mutilating surgery that removes their reproductive organs. Puberty blockers can also adversely affect bone strength and the brain.

HB 283 does not distinguish between an adult who has made a mature and considered decision and a child or teen who has been influenced and encouraged to declare themselves as “trans” through social media, peer-groups, or confirming counseling where a licensed counselor or physician “confirms” the child’s self-diagnosis. Balanced counseling that looks at the underlying causes of sexual dysphoria is rarely undertaken.

It is widely recognized that the human brain is still developing until about age 25, which is why juveniles are not held to the same level of responsibility for serious crimes committed under age 18. For these same reasons, a child under 18 should not be able to consent to actions that permanently remove their ability to reproduce and become biological parents. By removing parental guidance and consent from the process, HB 283 will negatively impact the parent-child relationship and the two-parent family as a basic unit of society.

The movement to promote transgender “coming out” and counseling and treatment is a very lucrative financial endeavor for numerous professions. It is unconscionable to allow these treatments and surgeries to be performed on anyone under age 21 or at least 18. Recent changes to Maryland law reduced the age from 16 years to 12 years of age for a child to consent to mental health counseling and treatment.

For all of these reasons, please either amend HB 283 to exclude anyone under 21 years of age or vote an **UNFAVORABLE** report for **HB 283**.

Sincerely,
Ella Ennis