

**Emily Tarsell, LCPC**

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**2314 Benson Mill Road  
Sparks, Maryland 21152  
February 15, 2024**

**Unfavorable SB 119 (HB 691)**

Dear Chair Beidle and Finance Committee Members,

I am Emily Tarsell, a mother, licensed therapist and founder of Health Choice Maryland. I write to ask for an Unfavorable vote for SB119 for the following reasons.

Last year, you passed HB283, a so-called Gender Affirming Treatment Bill, which did not have age limits and did not require parental informed consent for life altering and irreversible procedures on minors. That bill which is now law allows 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.

Because it is our responsibility to protect children and adolescents from possible exploitation and self harm, I testified last year that such 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. As a parent and a clinician who counseled many youth and adolescents, I cannot understand how in good conscience that bill passed without age restrictions or at the very least, parental consent for minors.

This bill goes one step further and gives legal cover against liability to those who provide such draconian procedures on minors. Adding such procedures under the umbrella of "legally protected health care" would remove all guardrails against exploitation of vulnerable minors and leave them without legal recourse against potential harm and medical abuse. I passionately urge you to veto this bill or at the very least carve out an exception for minors under 21 years of age.

Thank you.

Emily Tarsell, LCPC