



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

Re: **HB 0722** – Health – Minors – Gender and Sex Transition – **FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members,

The Maryland Federation of Republican Women supports HB 0722, which will prevent minors from obtaining confirming counseling, cross-sex hormones, and sex-change surgery without parental knowledge and consent.

Our support for this bill does not ignore those struggling with personal identity issues. Our concern is with allowing minors to make decisions without parental participation that will result in life-altering and irreversible physical changes.

**Children and teens lack the life experience and maturity to make these decisions.**

Their life experiences, judgment and maturity are limited. The **human brain is still developing until about age 25**, which is why juveniles in Maryland are not held to the same level of responsibility for serious crimes committed under age 18. Individuals under age 18 cannot get a tattoo or piercing (other than earlobes) without a parent or guardian's permission. The legal age to purchase tobacco, alcohol or cannabis is 21. A citizen under age 18 cannot vote in state and federal elections.

Children and teens are very vulnerable. Sex and gender issues are complex. Until recently, the recommended treatment was a multidisciplinary approach that progressed through three stages – life experience in the desired role, hormones of the desired gender, then surgery. In today's environment, minors are being guided to question their gender identity from an early age. Too quickly, if even a little confused, the trend is to refer them for puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and/or transition surgery.

Our concern is the **almost total focus on gender transition** rather than long-term psychotherapy for the whole person to explore possible underlying issues for their distress, such as depression, anxiety, abuse, autism, or family dysfunction.

A 2019 Canadian study distributed by NIH suggests that **gender dysphoria persists from childhood into adulthood only 12%–27% of the time**.<sup>1</sup> That means that, by adulthood, as few as 73% and as many as 88% of youth who experienced gender dysphoria have returned to living as the sex assigned at birth

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6336471/>



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### **Gender-affirming surgery is irreversible.**

Gender-affirming surgery (removing the breasts and internal female reproductive organs or the male reproductive organs) is irreversible. It precludes the individual, later in life, from choosing to naturally reproduce – a most basic human desire. Many minors will never experience an intimate sexual relationship.

These surgeries are very invasive and painful. Puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones are powerful drugs that can render a minor sterile. They can adversely affect bone strength and brain development. Vaginoplasty can result in incontinence and urethral strictures. A lifetime of vaginal dilation is required because the body identifies the newly-created vaginal vault as a wound:

Source: <https://transcare.ucsf.edu/guidelines/vaginoplasty>

*Dilation frequency: 0-3 months after surgery 3 times/day for 10 minutes each time, 3-6 months after surgery 1/day for 10 minutes each time, more than 6 months after surgery 2-3/week for 10 minutes each time, more than 9 months 1-2x/week.*

### **Other safe options are available.**

The Gender Exploratory Therapy Association (GETA) in its “*A Clinical Guide for Therapists Working with Gender Questioning Youth*”:

**“Effective psychotherapy can lead to greater freedom and agency by helping young people with gender dysphoria discover creative solutions to their problems, solutions that are safer and potentially more liberating than gender affirming treatments.”**

Children and teens are very impressionable and highly susceptible to peer pressure, social media and chat room influence, and the opinions of counselors and educators. Puberty’s many changes can cause anxiety and even anger, increasing the vulnerability of teens. Adolescents need stability and reassurance, not surgery.

Please give **HB 0722** a **FAVORABLE** Report.

Sincerely,  
Sharon Carrick  
President  
Maryland Federation of Republican Women