

Honored Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

I started taking estrogen at the age of 18. At age 19, I had sex reassignment surgery. After more than twenty years of trying to live in the world as a woman I had to face the reality that while sex traits can be modified, sex itself cannot be changed and the past cannot be rewritten.

As a teenager I had unrealistic expectations about what was possible with what is now called “gender-affirming care.” I learned about the best-case outcomes, which even in the early days of the Internet were exaggerated, while I ignored the more common outcomes resulting in lifelong pain, sexual dysfunction, and unending medical complications. I was reckless, obsessed, and impulsive, which is totally normal adolescent behavior.

Contrary to claims by some therapists and doctors working in the field of gender medicalization, young people cannot actually understand the enormity of the decision to modify one’s body to emulate the other sex. Furthermore, these very clinicians are often negligent in their duty to properly inform patient families about the risks of the procedures. Although misinformation is rife, perhaps the most egregious lie is the misrepresentation of the suicide attempt risk of this patient population, which while higher than that of other youth, is in-line with the risk profile of other youth with mental health difficulties. Of that latter group, the appropriate treatment is therapy and psychotropic medications, not hormones and surgery.

Having engaged in non-profit activism work around gender medicine, my view is that patient care has been discarded by those who have become “true believers” in gender identity. Instead of transition being used as a palliative treatment for those unable to manage gender dysphoria symptoms through less radical means. Patients are being systemically taken advantage of and harmed by current-day practices. I can hardly believe that children are considered good candidates for sex changes. At the very least, parents need to be involved in these irreversible decisions.

For the sake of the families of Maryland, I hope you will advance HB 722.

Sincerely,

Corinna Cohn