

Good afternoon, honorable delegates of the committee. My name is Richa Tripathi, and I'm a junior at John F. Kennedy High School in Montgomery County. For the sake of "protecting the kids," as this bill attempts and fails to accomplish, I urge an unfavorable report on HB1399.

There is a myth that many people take to be fact: The myth that a minor can just go to school and have a "horrible operation," and come back home with physical changes to their body that will forever change their gender perception in society. This is simply untrue.

Many transgender kids start their journey by exploring their gender presentation— changing pronouns, then changing their style of clothing, then going by other names or nicknames, whether they make legal changes with their school systems and local offices or not. Making a physical change to affirm their gender identity is not an immediate change— and doctors and medical specialists across the state don't just hand out procedures like some people seem to think they do. It is not just a mental state or diagnosis, it is a *medical process* that requires parental consent for individuals below 18 years of age, and is carried out with the combined and careful input of the child, their family, and medical professionals, in order to make a decision that is best for the minor. This care has been called "life-saving," as by affirming a minor's gender identity physically, they are given the impression that they matter and can more comfortably fit into their own bodies. If you want to "protect the kids," as this act is titled, it is actually in your best interest to preserve this gender affirming care, or "cross-sex hormone therapy," as it is referred to in this bill.

Additionally, those who are caught recommending or giving this medical treatment are guilty of a felony and subject to no more than *life imprisonment*. I read the bill's language carefully and am appalled by its implications, and the dangerous precedent it sets for holding medical professionals under intense scrutiny, as has been done in states across America with the contentious issue of abortion in the past. This is an unreasonable measure that puts not just minors at risk but medical professionals as well, who have received the highest forms of education to be able to recommend and administer such care to begin with.

With or without this medical treatment, a person is the gender they identify with. However, we have seen the positive effects of gender affirming care for trans kids and their support systems, and the last thing we should be doing is limiting that care under the false idea of children being able to change their gender at the drop of a hat.