

Hello!

I am writing to you today to inform you, reader, that I believe the guidelines laid out in the fiscal and policy note for HB 679 will do more harm than good when it comes to the health and safety of both minors and adults. I can't conceive of any reason that this legislation would need to be passed other than to clearly target a very small population of individuals who live in our state. If I am wrong, and the point of this bill is not to target members of the transgender population of Maryland, then know that it will undeniably disproportionately affect them.

I cannot pretend to be a doctor. What I do know is that an overall ban of a certain medical treatment for an entire age group could have dangerous fallout for a variety of reasons. What puberty-related medical disorders are treated with hormone replacement therapy, or hormone blockers, that are not related to gender dysphoria? Precocious and delayed puberty are both medical disorders specific to children that use hormone replacement therapy treatments to alleviate the symptoms of these disorders, which can have life-long consequences if left untreated. Puberty blockers were invented to treat these very disorders in children *without* gender dysphoria – why rob them of a resource essential to their wellbeing to spite a comparative few? Especially when these children have grown into healthy adults, who continue to take the medicine, who have taken these medicines longer than someone possibly experiencing gender dysphoria might, and have happy, healthy families? Hormone replacement therapy is also used to treat acne, menstrual problems, endometriosis, and even breast cancer. Which, while these are things that may be more common problems for adults, can be just as devastating for children. Would you rob a child of cancer treatment? Would you knowingly prevent a child with breast cancer from accessing medicine that would slow the release of their hormones, therefore slowing the spread of cancer through their body, allowing doctors more precious time to give these kids a chance at a normal life?

These are all things I know after doing perhaps an hour's worth of research, to find a reason for why there would be a case for banning these medicines for minors. Why must a licensed doctor choose between using a medicine that could save his or her patient's life and becoming a felon? One of the reasons I love Maryland is because of how many doctors we have. It is a blessing to live in a state where we have so many medical professionals and institutions. We have an embarrassment of choices, especially in central Maryland, and can find doctors that will truly work with us to find solutions that feel right. If I were a doctor, and prescribing the treatment my patient needed was illegal, would it not be more beneficial to leave? To take my practice somewhere where the treatment is legal, so that I could continue to make a living?

I want to reinforce that I know you believe to have the best interest of children in mind when writing this bill, and I empathize with that. But what I cannot empathize with is a general ban on entire treatments, which has so clearly not been discussed with or reviewed by medical professionals, and puts more children's lives in danger. One of my closest friends is a childhood breast cancer survivor – I cannot imagine a world without her. She has a tattoo of the pink breast cancer awareness ribbon, a reminder of her strength and of the lengths that doctors went to save her life. She is a nurse today, in the NICU, saving countless babies every year, keeping a close watch and making sure they live through the day, every day. Imagine if we had lost her.

Thank you for your time and for your understanding.