

House Committee on Public Health and Human Services
Rep. Brenda Landwehr

Kiernan McCarty
Private Citizen
Opponent Testimony, Oral Virtual

Chair Landwehr and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity for me to speak today. I'm Kiernan McCarty and I am opposed to HB2791, "Enacting the forbidding abusive child transitions act."

To be transparent, I am a 22-year-old Transgender Man from Colorado, though I am a Kansas voter and constituent in Hays. I consider both places to be my home, where I have strong community ties.

Enacting a law that considers my gender-affirming treatment as "abuse" or "mutilation" by my physicians and parents is a gross misrepresentation of exactly what I went through as a teenager to become the person that I am today. I do not consider myself "abused" or "mutilated" by my parents nor by my physicians. However, several bills in the legislature are attempting to make it seem that I and those who support me are criminals who oppose biological realities. This is wrong. Ever since I was a young kid, biology and medical science have been some of my favorite subjects. I am a flawed individual who struggles with many things, but critical thinking and my values in human rights are not those. My health is not in danger, nor am I a criminal. I'm writing to inform the committee of what's really happening between transgender patients and their doctors from my personal experience as well as the consequences that this and similar bills might have on LGBTQ+ Kansans.

To give some background, I underwent Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) at age 16, the legal age at which a minor can consent to hospital, medical, or surgical treatment or procedures without parents' consent in both CO & KS. I had top surgery—or a double mastectomy—as an adult, at age 18. Even though I did not need the legal consent of my parents, both HRT and my surgical procedure were under the supervision and consent of my parents, one of whom, my father, is a family practice physician. In Colorado, I was required to provide documentation of several recommendations before considering any form of medical intervention. Providing regulations and standards for gender transition, in my opinion, is a great alternative to an outright ban or punishment for gender-affirming care for minors.

Before medically transitioning, my doctor and surgeon both required me to provide a signed letter from my therapist, whom I had been discussing my gender identity with for 1-2 years prior. This was a signed acknowledgement that I was experiencing symptoms of gender dysphoria, defined best in my opinion by the NHS as, "a sense of unease that a person may have because of a mismatch between their biological sex and their gender identity. This sense of unease or

dissatisfaction may be so intense it can lead to depression and anxiety and have a harmful impact on daily life.” When I finally told my parents that I was questioning my gender identity, they were worried about what that meant for me and my future. But they told me that they would love and support me no matter what and showed me that by trusting me and allowing open and honest communication between us.

When going through the medical transitioning process, each physician provided me with ample amounts of written informational packets and resources. One of which was the option to freeze my eggs before beginning HRT. This was just a precautionary measure, as I'd been informed by multiple doctors and medical websites that testosterone therapy for Female-to-Male transgender people is not a reliable form of birth control and it does not guarantee sterilization. Transgender men who have their uterus, ovaries, fallopian tubes, and vagina can and still get pregnant, carry to term, and deliver healthily. They do so even after having gone through testosterone therapy. I can provide any extra information on how this is possible, but I want to emphasize my own positive experience with gender transition and accessing gender-affirming care as a minor.

I stand here today, a high school graduate and a college student one semester away from completing my BFA. I am a whole, functional, and healthy 22-year-old human being who has been taking testosterone and undergoing required blood tests twice a year for 7 years without any complications. Despite it all, I am a significant minority within the transgender community who has the proper medical and mental health knowledge, support, and access. Many of my transgender friends and community members are struggling to dig themselves out of poverty with the emotional baggage that comes with having unsupportive families and communities. Many of us are struggling to find housing, love, healthcare, proper medications, jobs, etc. due to a culture of people refusing to understand us as LGBTQ+ people. I fight every day for the love and support of my community to grow so that others like me can thrive as I did with all the privileges or blessings I was given.

I now require my doctors and physicians to know about the health issues affecting Transgender men, since despite my gender being male in my day-to-day life, my biology is no longer binary. I am not a third gender, I just have different healthcare needs than most cisgender women and cisgender men. Enacting laws to attempt to reverse or redefine what has already occurred in my life as a legal, consensual, and well-informed gender transition will limit my and others' access to medical resources, which are already in scarce supply.

I am not a special case. There are upwards of 14,500 Transgender Kansans alone that statistics even know of. Since I was thirteen years old, I've been deeply connected and involved in my community of LGBTQ+ people who have similar positive experiences to me. The LGBTQ+ community is not a political group. We are of different races, ethnicities, religions, cultures, interests, social classes, etc. We are a diverse group of people from all over the world who have been struggling for tolerance and acceptance in different cultures and societies for millennia. We want to be included in the conversations about healthcare, mental health, and humanity. Bills such as HB2791 attempt to erase our real struggles, define who we are, fabricate our motivations, and confine us to political ideas on gender. These bills are being pushed by

lobbyists and politicians despite there being a growing body of peer-reviewed research and data that supports the diversity of human gender and sexuality.

If this bill is passed, Kansas as a state and its healthcare system will suffer from LGBTQ+ folks slipping through the cracks even more than we already do. HB2791 threatens punishment on trans people and their families and doctors for attempting to access gender-affirming care, which is meant to supplement our mental and physical well-being. Gender-affirming care is for cisgender men and women who struggle with hormonal, sexual, and mental health problems, too. Why are transgender people being denied access to these treatments when there is data and research to suggest that it's necessary and that it works for us?

I am one of the countless living examples that Trans people can thrive and live healthy lives when given the trust and support that every human needs. It's important to me that all people, regardless of their class or minority status, have the options and access available for living a healthy, supported life as an LGBTQ+ person. These bills will significantly limit medical and mental health access to lower-income families who are already struggling to understand and support their LGBTQ+ family members. We are not mutilated, broken, or disordered, we just have different experiences and needs that require different options. Still, we are a lot more similar than we are different, I promise.

Thank you all again for your time and for this opportunity to speak to you about my story. I urge you to oppose HB2791, and I would be happy to answer any further questions.