

## In-Person Testimony in Opposition of HB 454

### **CAM OGDEN:**

My name is Cam Ogden, and I am a former trans kid. After 6 years of counseling, and being prevented from accessing gender-affirming care, I stand here today as a transgender adult.

Like many trans people, I spent a long time living as someone that I wasn't. My parents were convinced that if they just ignored my problems, or took me to the right therapist, they would have a cisgender child in a few years.

Despite the trend of misinformation spreading across the country, that's not how this works. I'm speaking here alongside my mother so you all can hear both sides of how fear mongering about trans kids and gender-affirming medical care causes irreparable harm to children and risks destroying families.

There were of course questions after I came out to my parents. Popular media portrays trans people as falling into gender stereotypes, but I've gotten punched in the jaw more times than I've put on lipstick. So although I'd known for years that I wasn't cisgender, the news came as a shock to my parents.

They took me to a therapist for anxiety and other mental health challenges. I didn't understand why I couldn't go to someone who specialized in working with trans kids. My therapist was helping me, just not with my gender identity or dysphoria. Every time I tried to talk about the growing terror I felt at my own body or deepening voice I was shut down.

We'll talk about *that* when you're less anxious.

We'll talk about *that* when you're doing better in school.

We'll talk about *that* when you're exercising more.

I did all of it and more.

I went to therapy, I took medication for anxiety and depression, but I couldn't escape the irreparable changes of puberty, and I continued to slip.

I worked hard in school and got a 35 on the ACT, but I couldn't imagine my academics leading to a brighter future. In spite of some successes, my self confidence continued to collapse. Because I saw no future for myself as I was.

I exercised to improve my health, and built the physically fit body a teenager should be proud of. That didn't stop me from burning my body hair off with Nair to the point of getting chemical burns that I had to treat alone. I thought if I told someone what I had done it would become impossible for me to ever get gender affirming care.

My mother told me that I would never “look feminine enough” to live as a woman, and my father told me that these feelings would go away as I grew up.

I bounced between therapists and doctors who all treated my transgender identity like a waste product of some other issue. Yet I don't blame them for their confusion. I should have been receiving evidence based care. Including (if necessary) the use of blockers and hormones.

Once, I finally started transitioning with HRT, my anxiety got better, and I don't need medication for it anymore. My school work got better because education was now a gift I was preparing for my future self. I exercise now not because I desperately want to prove I'm good enough to transition, but because I care about myself and want to take care of my body.

“Watchful waiting” permanently damaged me, but it didn't kill me. I knew in my heart that I wasn't trans because I hated how I was born. I was trans because I loved the person I knew I *could be*, and I wasn't going to give up before I'd taken my best shot at being **me**.

#### **JEANNE OGDEN:**

I love you Cam, I love who you are, and I'm sorry I put off meeting you for so long.

I'm proud to stand before this committee next to my daughter. I want you all to think about why the parents who spoke in support of this legislation last spring stood here alone.

It's not because their kids were stolen by “gender ideology” or groomed. It's because they pushed their children away out of fear.

I know this, because I was once afraid too.

When Cam came out to me, my world shook. I couldn't imagine how my beautiful child couldn't love herself as she was. I believed trans people existed, just not my child. I was sure something else was going on, something we could fix. I went online and found articles spewing misinformation about social contagion, high rates of regret, clinics pushing treatments and ideologies that would make her trans if she wasn't already. Worst of all, I was led to believe that being trans, that *transitioning*, was the worst possible outcome. Testimony presented to you, facts I know now, do not support that assessment.

I said no to gender affirming care. I didn't need Gary Click to interpret the studies for me. I didn't need the Center for Christian Virtue to usurp my parental rights. I believed the lies and my daughter suffered.

It took a long time for Cam and I to regain the trust that we now cherish. I wish I could go back and undo the harm I caused.

I urge you to learn from my mistakes. Don't fall for the same tricks that I did. Vote no on HB 454.

