

Good morning, Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Denson, and Members of the Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding HB 454.

My name is Brendan Kelley. I am here speaking to you today as a father. I have two daughters, one biological and one who might as well be. My teenager is a leader at her school, is teaching herself video editing, and loves Fortnite. My preschooler is learning to spell, takes excellent care of all the bugs in our neighborhood, and loves anything and everything her older sister does. As most fathers do, I want my children to grow up safe and healthy, to be contributing members of society, to have the best lives they possibly can.

As fathers, we wonder about our children's futures. Will they find good jobs? Will they find someone worthy who loves them? Will they love themselves?

As fathers, we worry about our children. Will they get sick? Will they get hurt? Will they have healthcare?

I have experienced all the normal, magical moments a father experiences: meeting my children for the first time, reading to them at night, sharing my hobbies and favorite music with them.

And then I experienced a moment I never even considered as a possibility. One cold, January day, my older daughter told my wife and I she was a girl. She was eight years old. I wondered...about her future. I worried...about what her life would hold. When the shock wore off, I went back through all those normal, magical moments and realized there were clues. When she was three, she wanted her room to be bubblegum pink. When she was four, she wanted hair "as long as the princess in Tangled." When she was five, she wanted to be a girl mouse ballerina for Halloween. To be clear, she didn't say, "I want to be a girl." She said, "I am a girl." She had not been taught about transgender people. She knew who she was without anyone telling her.

She is now fourteen, and we have been on quite the journey. We were lucky that such a respected community institution as Nationwide Children's Hospital has a clinic that specializes in youth and adolescent gender medicine. Every step of the way over the past five-and-a-half years, my daughter's team has provided thoughtful, compassionate, evidence-based guidance. We have not experienced any pushing or coercion. Instead, we are utilizing the partnership we have with these providers to create an individualized roadmap for my daughter's journey.

If passed, HB 454 would make my job as a father much harder. This bill would take away my ability as a parent to make the best decisions I can for my child. Please leave decision making in the hands of parents. Do not refer this bill out of committee.