

Shannon Scott-Miller

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee, thank you for this opportunity to voice my opposition to House Bill 454.

My name is Shannon Scott-Miller. I appreciate your time today and the opportunity to address HB 454. This bill denies the fundamental rights of parents to choose medical care for our children. There are already laws in place for practitioners who chose not to give this type of care. I am asking you to support our freedom as parents to work with highly specialized doctors and mental health providers who chose to use evidence based affirming care.

I am the proud parent of two teenagers, a 13 year old daughter and 15 year old son. I am also a therapist who spent 20 years working in a pediatric hospital providing therapy to children struggling with chronic and terminal illness as well as mental health concerns. To say this impacted my commitment to my own children being physically and mentally healthy is an understatement. While I was pregnant with my first, my husband and I interviewed 6 different pediatricians to assure we found a doctor who was excellent in medical care AND focused on good mental health. When my kids had health concerns like allergies or asthma, we did our research and sought out doctors who specialized in these areas.

The same is true when one of our children started to vocalize that they identified with a gender different from their biological sex. We talked to mental health and medical professionals around the country, seeking knowledge and advice for how to best support our child. We read all the research we could get our hands on, coming from all points of view. We quickly became aware of the rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide attempts in children who were denied the ability to explore their gender identity. Nearly half of the children who are not supported at home have attempted suicide. It was clear that to keep our child safe, our unconditional support was needed and finding the right mental health providers and doctors that could guide us was essential. If this bill had been in place at the time, our right to support our child would have been denied. The risk to their mental and physical safety would be unbearable.

Fortunately, we currently have the freedom to choose mental health providers and doctors that are highly trained and offer specialized care just like we did when our children needed help for allergies and asthma. As concerned parents, we cautiously sought out mental health providers and doctors who were open to being challenged. We chose mental health providers and doctors so we could make decisions that were best to keep our child healthy and safe. This bill does not take into account that for those who seek affirming mental health and medical care. It seeks to replace the carefully researched guidelines and for affirming care put in place by the American Medical Association and American Psychiatric Association who both have regulating bodies to assure appropriate and ethical practices are followed. Each decision made is weighed heavily by the team - trained mental health professionals, doctors who specialize in affirming care, and supportive loving parents who are all focused on the well-being of their child. This bill denies our fundamental rights as parents to choose medical decisions for our child. There are already laws in place for practitioners who chose not to give this type of care. I am asking you to support our freedom as parents to work with doctors and mental health providers who chose to use evidence based practices. I tell my kids on a regular basis "My job

is to keep you safe.” By passing this legislation, you are denying me my right to keep my children safe. I implore you to protect my freedom so I can protect my children.

I urge you to oppose HB 454 and protect our state’s youth.