

Testimony of Ashton Colby
Founder, Gender YOUphoria
On HB 454
House Families, Aging and Human Services Committee
Nov. 16, 2022

Chairwoman Manchester, members of the committee, my name is Ashton Colby.

I'm a transgender man and am testifying as an opponent of HB 454. Completely banning all medical interventions for any individual under 18 with gender dysphoria goes against internationally recognized health guidelines.

I have spoken publicly about my gender transition to thousands of people each year through my advocacy career. I have met thousands of transgender adults, adolescents and their families over the past decade of doing advocacy work for other people like me.

I am 30 years old. I had gender dysphoria beginning at age five through adolescence. I began medically transitioning from female to male 11 years ago at age 19. I regularly wore boys clothes throughout elementary, middle school and high school to reflect my gender identity. I began taking testosterone hormone therapy over a decade ago. I have actually received surgeries listed, including subcutaneous mastectomy and metoidioplasty. My first surgery nine and half years ago. I can truly speak to the long term impact transitioning has had on my life. My quality of life and overall health and well-being has improved as a result of these medical interventions.

My physical health, including hormone levels, is monitored every six months via blood work and tests have shown that I am consistently in exceptionally good health. I ran a half marathon earlier this year. As a result of not starting puberty blockers a subcutaneous mastectomy was necessary because I developed female breast tissue from an initial female puberty. This surgery could have been avoided with the better understanding we have about adolescent gender dysphoria now compared to 15 years ago.

Additionally, this bill misrepresents the realities of gender transition for adolescents and adults. The language in this bill is misleading by including an exhaustive list of genital surgeries that, under internationally recognized standards of care, have only been received by adults. This misrepresents the realities of gender dysphoria-related healthcare for adolescents by listing these procedures and alongside banning the recognized standards of care for adolescents that include hormone replacement therapy at the proper age.

Parents with transgender adolescents come up to me after my speeches and ask for advice. The first thing I always recommend is for their child to go to mental health therapy to get emotional and social support. I have known personally of many 16-year-olds who, after seeking mental health support for experiencing gender dysphoria for at least 12 months, started hormone therapy. Several are dear friends of mine who are now adults my age who are happy and thriving in all areas of life. It is less often you hear of positive transition stories because these adults just go about normal lives once fully transitioned. Please do not pass this bill.