

May 24, 2023

Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Stewart, and other members of the House Public Health Policy Committee,

My name is Lucinda Isaacs, and my pronouns are she/her. I am a minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and have been writing extensively about gender and spirituality. Originally from Sharonville, Ohio, I have served as a pastor for over a decade, including seven years in our great state.

It may sound strange for proponents of this bill to hear that gender-affirming healthcare is life-saving, and that can be attributed to thinking that being transgender is a choice. My lived experience as a trans woman shows the need for gender affirming healthcare, which has undoubtedly improved my wholeness and well-being.

I recall the first time I preached after beginning Hormone Replacement Therapy. It was Christmas Eve two years ago, and I had started receiving this form of gender-affirming healthcare three days earlier. On Christmas Eve, my task is to make a mysterious story—all of eternity entering flesh—as simple as possible. Sometimes my attempts to draw the congregation closer to this mystery are better than others. Some people, even Christians, tend to find the story infuriating because of an idea that bodies are far too sensual and unpredictable for a god. This embodiment, though, invites humans to embody our deepest truths.

I looked out from the pulpit. I brought out my soothing, meditative voice to quote the fourth century theologian Augustine: “Behold who you are.”

I began to draw my next breath, but my entire body tightened as if I were bracing for impact. I grabbed the pulpit so I wouldn’t lose my place in my notes. In place of a rattling noise in my head, I experienced silence. This silence never accompanied my speech before, and the static was so ubiquitous that I had never noticed it. I finished my breath and spoke Augustine’s next words: “Become what you receive.”

My arms moved freely upward and outward—reaching out to the congregation and signaling my desire to hold them up to the glory of God. Words embodied themselves seamlessly in me, and I brought the words into being. My body moved without reservation. My body became mine in a way it never had before. There was a new presence that I had with myself and that I could share with others. That noise in my head had always required a serious exertion of energy to break through.

That noise that was in my head was in part anxiety. That noise caused “clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.” The noise was a constant alarm like a check engine light. That noise caused night terrors and safety plans. That noise often made me withdraw from being emotionally present to those I love. That noise was Gender Dysphoria.

Once that noise was gone, I began embodying one of my deepest truths.

I realized that I wasn't delusional. I no longer doubted every major medical association that this was the best healthcare for me. I had the freedom to work with my mental and medical healthcare providers, following the standards of care of these organizations, for my own healing and wholeness.

Not only would it be misguided to restrict that freedom and the practice of those standards of care, but it is wrong. Furthermore, it is a matter of faith for me to embody that which is life-giving and true. Gender variance is not only natural and innate, but I believe it is also a gift.

Restricting access to gender affirming healthcare will harm youth and families.

I urge you to vote no on House Bill 68.

Sincerely,
Lucinda Isaacs