

Testimony: April 26, 2023. Anna Heran

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Public Health Policy Committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of HB 68.

First off, let me say that I am a lifelong Democrat, left of left, and recently divorced from my same-sex partner of nearly 24 years. I have been pretty live and let live in my life. However, when the possibility of so-called gender transition crossed into my life, via my child, I became aware of some pretty disturbing facts and behaviors.

In 2018, my then 15-year-old daughter, a high school junior, was away from home for a semester away at a special natural sciences high school. She left in January of that year. Sometime in February, she sent an email announcing that she was now my son, what her new name was, and that she wanted us to use male pronouns. I felt like the world was ending.

She was never confused about who she was. I never forced her to conform to a norm. She was just female. I didn't care that she liked playing in the dirt, piano, ballet, animals, and legos. Everything was fair game. Her wardrobe ran a wide gamut, to fit whatever mood she was in. My mother is a retired civil engineer who specialized in building bridges, and my grandmother was an early computer programmer. For a liberal arts major, I was weirdly good at math. I had no interest in restraining her interests or restricting the possibilities open to her.

However, those interests were turned against her. Her exuberance and confidence were deemed manly, as were her skills in math and science. At her school here in Ohio, she was introduced to gender ideology and encouraged to explore where she fit on the gender spectrum, as if that trumped biological reality. Once she announced this transgender identity, I started doing research, trying to find support. I tried really hard to get on board with it. All I could find at first were affirmation only groups. One I joined on Facebook had a rule that you couldn't question – anything. That was tantamount to murdering your child. That didn't seem right. I had questions. None of it made sense. I lasted about two days in that group. I did more digging and found a couple of left-leaning skeptical parent groups. I learned a few things. Don't affirm. Don't go to the gender clinics, of which there is one in my town. And, very importantly, there were already de-transitioners and desisters who were filled with regret. And no one in the medical community had done a thing to help them figure things out before they embarked on this journey.

I searched and finally found a therapist. Interviewed her. Explained what was going on. She'd not ever dealt with transgender issues, but she was a teen therapist. I found out that in my city, it wasn't legal for the therapist not to affirm. I didn't tell her that. I don't know if she knew it, but she risked fines and possible loss of license to treat my kid. I sent her every professional article I could find that encouraged skepticism and trying to get to the root cause of the dysphoria. I took a few other steps in addition to the therapy, all of which worked together to help her learn to love herself and to get through puberty with less distress.

Two and half years later, and an eating disorder diagnosis that was ultimately resolved, and my child told me one night that she'd had "some disordered ways of thinking that weren't serving her very well." Without prompting from me, she started using her given name again and my happy child was back. She

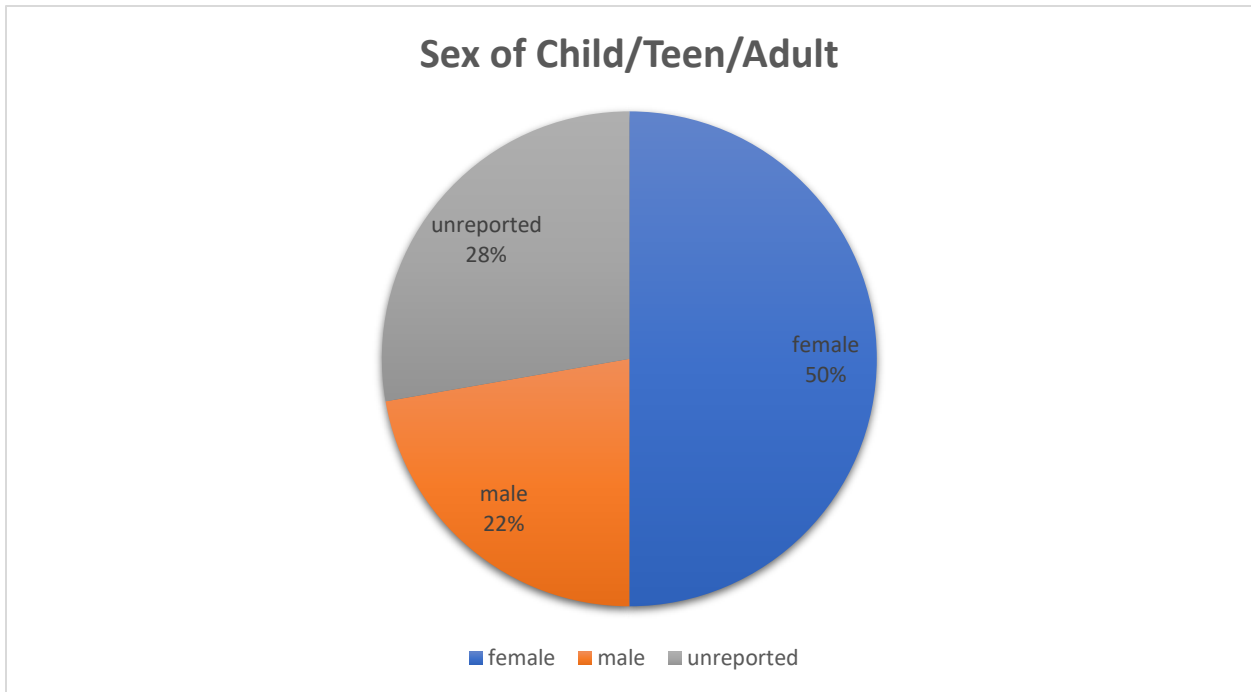
was never unhappier than when she was trans identifying. She still suffers from anxiety, but she knows now where it comes from, and she has the tools to cope with it more productively.

Today, she might be bisexual. But, she's in the early stages of seeing a young man. He's expressed potential interest in children someday, which she seems open to. If I'd just agreed to what she said wanted when she was 15 – this included a mastectomy, a hysterectomy, and phalloplasty – her options would be limited. I don't really care if she ends up procreating. That's a her-decision. But I wanted her to have options and choices when she was emotionally and physically ready to make them – which wasn't at age 15. She wouldn't have had options if I'd not parented her and slowed her down until her brain started that slow maturation process. She hadn't even used any of the parts yet that she was proposing to get rid of. How could she know what she might or might not want 10 or 15 years down the road? Asher mother, all I had to do was think about how certain I was of life when I was her age and how much life changed in ways I couldn't have predicted, how much I didn't know, which I realized sometime in my mid-20s.

She fits a profile for these kids. She's got ADHD, she's gifted, she has ASD characteristics. Change is hard enough when you're an average teenager. It's doubly so when you have these other factors at play. Black and white thinking becomes even more pronounced. Fear of growing up is more present because it means change. She's one of the lucky kids, though, in this era of medicalizing puberty. She desisted. We managed to avoid dangerous cross-sex hormones and irreversible surgeries. She doesn't have to be a lifelong medical patient.

As a consequence of my experience with my child, I became involved in an Ohio parent group to provide support to parents and caregivers just like me. We get requests for help weekly. We ask for a little information about the child involved and so many fit this same profile that described my child. Most have more than one comorbid condition. I've provided the statistical analysis we did from the submissions we've received.

Statistics based on information reported to Cardinal Support Network in the last approximately 2 years



Sex	
female	173
male	77
unreported	96

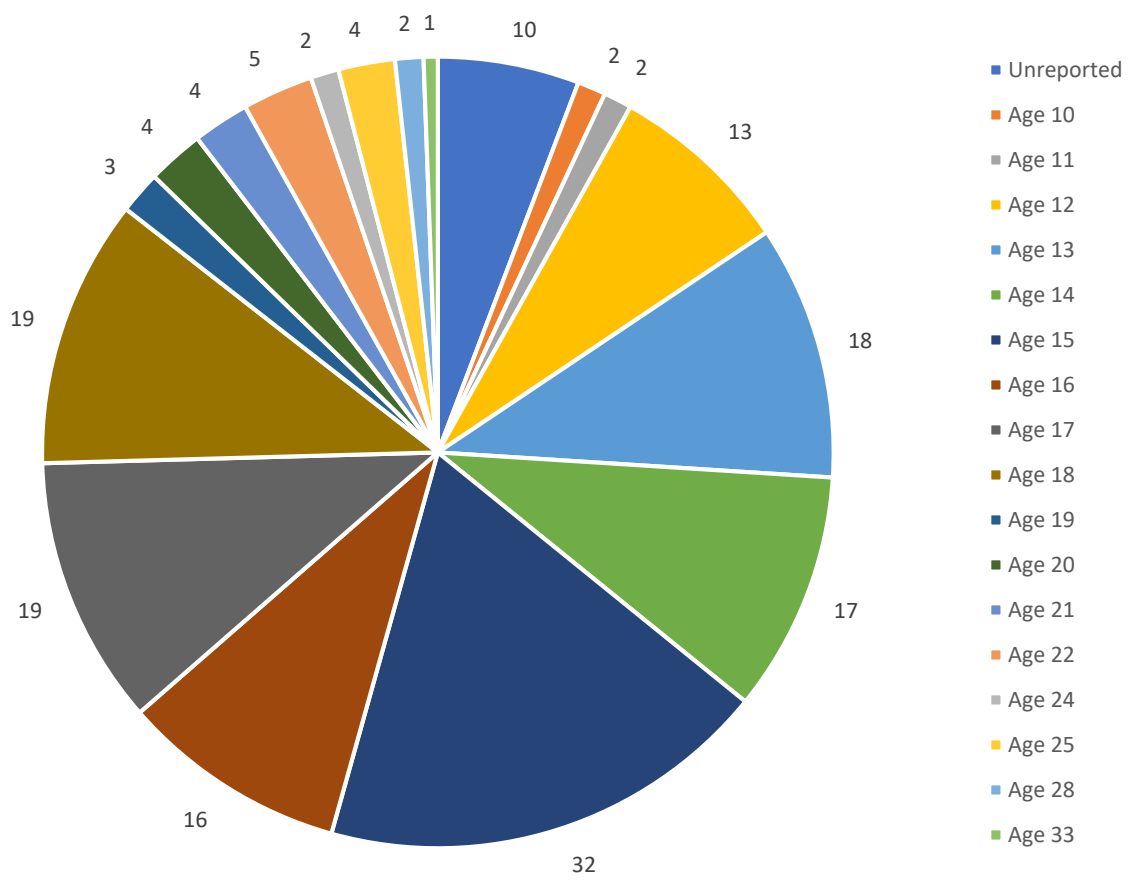
How long has the child been identifying as trans?

Females	1-3 years	134
	3-5 years	23
	5-10 years	11
	Unreported	5
Males	1-3 years	66
	3-5 years	7
	5-10 years	3
	Unreported	0

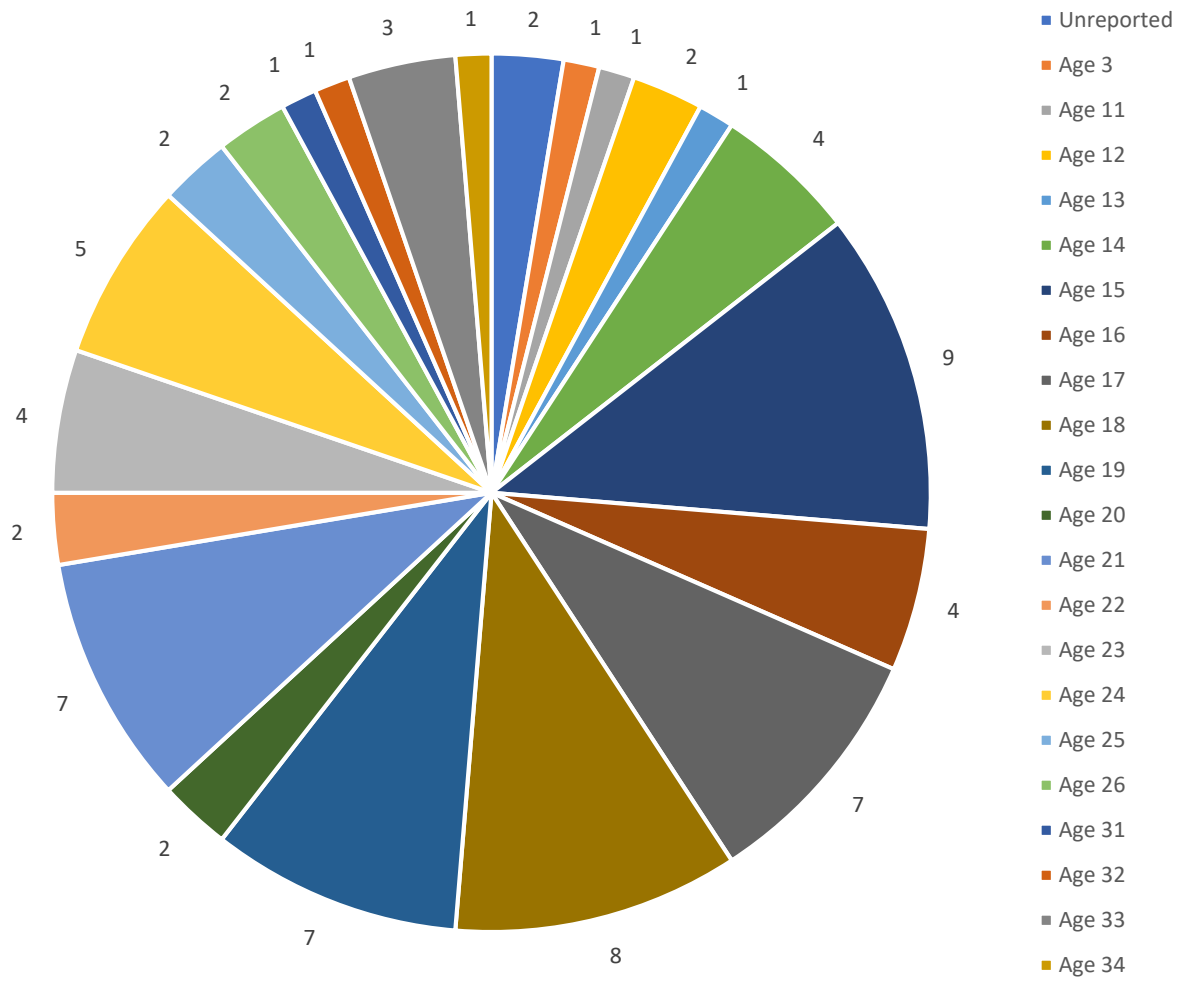
Unreported sex – All 96 were unreported on length of identity

Desisted/Detransitioned - 3

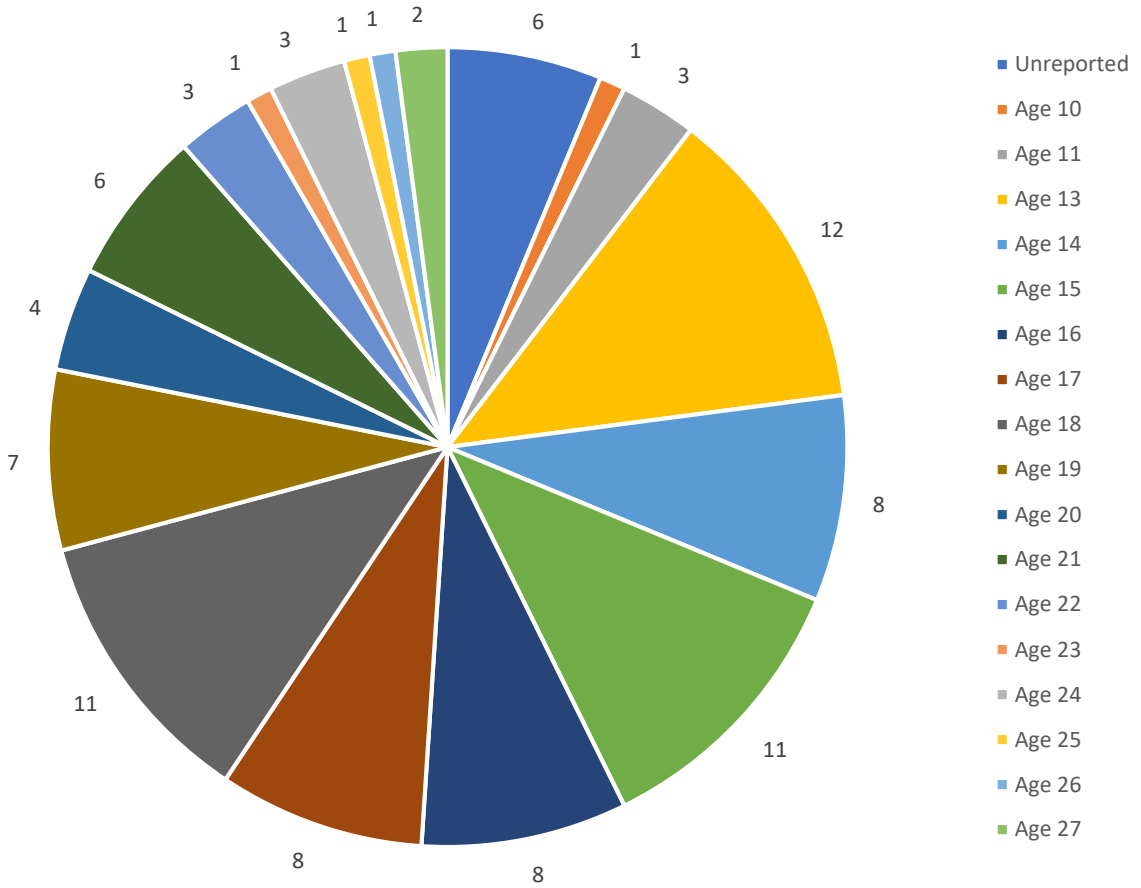
Female ages at onset of trans identity



Male ages at onset of trans identity



### Unreported Sex - ages at onset of trans identity



## Comorbidities

### Females

<b>Comorbid condition</b>	<b>Raw number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Anxiety	116	67%
Depression	101	58%
ADHD/ADD	50	29%
Miscellaneous other	37	21%
Trauma	19	11%
ASD	17	10%
Eating disorder	11	6%
Gifted	11	6%
OCD	6	3%
Bullied	3	2%

### Males

<b>Comorbid condition</b>	<b>Raw number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Anxiety	35	45%
Depression	30	39%
Miscellaneous other	25	32%
ADHD/ADD	18	23%
ASD	18	23%
OCD	11	14%
Trauma	7	9%
Bullied	3	4%
Gifted	3	4%
Eating disorder	1	1%

### Sex unreported

<b>Comorbid condition</b>	<b>Raw number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Anxiety	62	65%
Depression	47	49%
ASD	19	20%
Miscellaneous other	16	17%
ADHD/ADD	15	16%
Trauma	13	14%
OCD	5	5%
Eating disorder	5	5%
Gifted	2	2%
Bullied	1	1%

## Compounding Issues

felt like her brothers were distant
Divorced parents (get along, though different parenting styles)
She has struggled with adolescence, body changes, and is afraid of being perceived as a female. In her mind, she will be sexualized and objectified. At the end of 2020, she found out about LGBTQ+, became a supporter, and after a few months of reading about it and watching videos, she started to question her gender.
family troubles, poor grades
toxic relationship online and trauma related to the relationship/friendship, sensory issues
Hurt by friend group and started hanging out with a group of girls who all started identifying as non-binary and trans in 7th and 8th grades. She's been indoctrinated by friends, her older 'edgy' sister, school and the internet. She was raised in a happy nuclear family with strong Judeo-Christian values. Tradition, heritage and family have all been important. She's been in counseling for years (4 different ones) and raised in the Christian faith. We aren't hateful. We both have had gay friends while we don't agree with the lifestyle. We are at a loss. She's never behaved masculine or presented masculine. Even now she wears skirts, makeup, fake eyelashes etc but wants to be called 'he/him'. Changing her psychiatric this week and hoping for a better medication regimen. Hoping someone here may have an idea of the best 'cocktail' of antidepressants etc to help reduce or reverse gender dysphoria. Thank you. God bless you and this network.
trauma from childhood 'friend' that groomed her, was very toxic and manipulative. We believe the friend struggled with same sex attraction.
"bi", alcoholic/abusive dad
"Failure to launch"
horrible relationship with her mother
she then spent 14 months in therapeutic boarding school. She came back home to us just before xmas and started her ROGD just after.
Family troubles
artistic, abusive father
Family troubles
Family troubles
She has been on Lexapro and Quataprine for 3 years. Showed no early signs of gender confusion (ROGD). Heavily influenced by the internet & has self diagnosed to "fit in" and avoid dealing with trauma.
She has been adjusting to life in two households following her parents divorce at age 12, with puberty coming only 1-2 years thereafter during a time of more significant depression.
She comes from a divorced, secular household.
not fitting in with her peers, then end of 9th grade year March of 2020 is when COVID hit, so isolation for the next year. Had some trauma because of problem we had with her older brother (4 yrs older) who was Oppositional Defiant with multiple mental health issues, lots of screaming in the house for years. She also has had major friendship problems through the years since preschool until now, loss of close friends due to her having severe jealousy issues and possessiveness.
Family troubles
Trauma
Child was physically and verbally abused by father (CPS and police report exist). Child recently posted on Tiktok that they were raped



family troubles, abusive ex-husband
Family troubles
Family troubles
We are a military family and I believe the multiple moves has had an effect on my daughter.
Lesbian
Taking lithium and prozac
18 months inpatient treatment centers. Now in college outside Columbus OH.
18 months in inpatient treatment centers. Came home in a dress and five month later started to id as a boy.
issues with absent biological Father
seriously ill immediate family member
Death of grandparent, family stress
I believe she is on the autism spectrum - very high functioning, and fell into deep depression during the COVID remote learning and determined she is trans
Yes. My daughter was bullied terribly at her private school, just before the pandemic. Then I moved her to the public school when Covid broke out. She felt very isolated, depressed and alone. During that time, she struck up an online friendship with some claiming to be trans. I didn't know about this friendship - turned out to be a catfish. Found her a boarding school where she is happy but has a real need for attention. It is at this school that she decided that she is a boy. The school is all girls but seems to have support and even encourage transitioning. She also has a chronic disease which has required surgery and hospitalizations. She might be trans but she is definitely confused, immature and looking for attention. Before attending this school, she never expressed an interest in trans.
family troubles exist as her dad has never been part of her life
Family troubles
Family troubles
rapidly developing physically, and about to change schools. A lot of stressful things were happening all at once. Also, she has a history of anger control issues and a tendency to shut down rather than discuss difficult personal issues.
she blames the ED on the gender dysphoria and not being able to medically transition. I have not provided my real name as I have privacy concerns. Everything else is accurate.
no but socially awkward and very intelligent, didn't connect with peers
Divorce, peer group who are "all trans and all on testosterone"
Announced she was Trans a few months before her 13th birthday through a text. She suffers from anxiety, OCD ( since age 6, due to possible PANDAS), depression, possible ASD, low self esteem, no self confidence. Has difficulties making connections with people, has only had 5 true friends in her life she is now down to one (after all of the others dropped her for more popular friends) the only friend left is also FTM trans identifying and has had multiple hospitalizations for suicide attempts and self harm. There are relationship difficulties with my daughter and my husband ( her father) that have only been made worse after her coming out as transgender. She is a very black and white thinker. she has very limited categories of eating and will eat too much of bad foods then causing weight gain which hurts her self image even more. I don't think she really wants to be a boy but just doesn't think she can fit into the stereotype of girls she goes to school with. She goes by a different name at school she never asks us to call her anything different or by different pronouns. If I ask her why she goes by a different name she say it makes her feel better. prior to coming out she was a typical girl never seemed stressed about who she was or what she liked. Once puberty started (years before all of her other friends) she

shut down a bit and spent a lot of time online ( when she should have been sleeping) watching things that definitely influenced her coming out.
Divisive Divorce of the child's parents. Transgender Queer peer pressure/indoctrination from all parent, all parents partner and partners children.
The lockdown has been terrible for her.
Therapist not investigating other issues
Yes and therapist is not investigating that.
prior no, just didn't feel like he fit in now depression and anxiety
my child spent first 3 years in an orphanage, otherwise is doing well in life.
(was called a school shooter and criticized for being too masculine)Also important to note, I myself am a pediatrician, this is not true trans, he is having a trauma response
peers rejection, parents separation
Friend troubles
adoption issues
loss of father
Our son is a deep feeler and emotional at times, but besides these characteristics he would not be described as feminine at all! I firmly believe that he is being influenced by some of the classmates he sees at school, and by connections he has made online. My son is socially isolated himself (really has no friends). *In summary, I believe his gender questioning is a result of 1) his mental illness, 2) lack of friends, 3) society communicating that changing his gender will yield happiness, peace, and identity. We are a loving family of five, with no other traumas than my son's mental illness.
school refusal, family trauma in past
all their friends came out as trans a few years ago & many on hormones now.
He suggested tragic alterations of his body during the time he believed himself to be transgender. Now that he has realized it was all a mistake inflicted by a broken culture and medical establishment, he is devastated and angry. I am devastated and angry. And he is so angry with me he has recently taken "space." I am so grief-stricken and feel so guilty and duped by doctors, therapists, cultural trends, knee-jerk "woke culture," etc. I know no one in my position. I just want to find emotional support for me so I can better help my son.
Unknown event
Gender dysphoria "diagnosed" during son's first hospitalization for anorexia nervosa (July 2020).
Gay
He was all along a perfect male child, no issues. except some bullying at school and a Facebook incident. As far as we know we came to know of this just 6 months back. Might have been some body image issues which we did notice. A sports person . recently after moving to California he is coming up with all sorts of gender related issues and seem to be pressurized by a few pro LGBTQ peers.
yes, I am looking for a family therapist to work with my son and myself to help heal our broken relationship due to his trans identification. Any suggestions?
Identifying as transgender came very close to onset of severe anxiety symptoms post pandemic isolation
Family trauma
Adopted
High conflict divorce
Family issues

Everything got worse during the pandemic.
Depression and increased anxiety only after trans declaration.
We are a military family so multiple moves have been difficult for my daughter.
Lesbian
Adopted, brother with autism
Yes, family issues. Her therapist did not explore her issues but instead affirmed her, unbeknownst to us.
suffered with school refusal
creative & peer, social media & school influence
We had an assessment done and took the suggestion to begin a course of dbt therapy, and our family has completed the cycle and our daughter is in therapy. DBT has been tremendously helpful but we are having difficulty getting a reasonably priced adhd assesment.
In the time leading up to her coming out our family experienced extreme financial hardship which then culminated when we were threatened with homelessness as the pandemic began. So, yes. I would consider those to be traumatic events and comorbidities
A recent situation developed that I feel caused him some trauma. The timing of that coincides when he said he began to feel like a girl.
Trauma father died at 14
Not really, except from fighting a lot with a sibling. We moved from one country to another and we were under a lot of stress asa family.
Raped
Parents divorce
bullied in school
Outside influences