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Senate Committee Testimony –the SAFE Act

In 2018, while my daughter (age 15) was away for a semester, she emailed to say that she was trans, gave me a boy name she wanted me to use and male pronouns. This was a child who had never been uncomfortable in her body, who'd never been "forced" to act in stereotypical ways. Sometimes she liked twirly skirts and dresses, sometimes she liked jeans and digging in the dirt. She was encouraged in all of those things. As a life-long Liberal and voting Democrat, I didn't believe that behavior had any relevance to sex. With a civil-engineer mother and a computer-programmer for a grandmother, I was never under any impression that interest had anything to do with either sex or sexual orientation. These are still ideas I adhere to.

While my daughter was still away at school, I started doing research. The first things you come across are ALL about affirmation and the supposed suicide rates. I joined a Facebook group for parents. The number one rule was no questioning of your child's new identity. Any doubts were cause to get you removed from the group and tantamount to causing your child's inevitable suicide if you had questions and weren't ready to affirm. I lasted in that group less than a week. It didn't sit right with me, was irrational, and seemed, frankly, cultish. So, I kept digging for information and found 4thwavenow and Parents of ROGD Kids, where the approach seemed based on science and grounded in physical reality. I learned, first and foremost, do NOT visit any of the gender clinics. They would take an affirmation only approach and any hope of resolving my child's psychological angst would be subverted by hormones and eventual surgery. Meeting people in person, eventually, only confirmed that conviction. Parents I knew who had gone to the local clinic had lost their children to an ideologically fueled medical establishment that did not care about comorbid issues or what was really best for the child in the long-run.

I endeavored to find a real therapist, which I did. She treated my child as if she had an eating disorder (actually, the trans thing evolved into an eating disorder for a while), had never treated a trans teen before, and I sent the therapist every hard scientific/psychological article I could lay my hands on. It took almost 3 years of weekly therapy before my daughter finally told me that she had some disordered ways of thinking that weren't very helpful to her, that might be causing harm. She never came to me and said, I'm not trans, but she gradually began referring to herself as female, and, today, she continues to use her given name and is much more comfortable in her physical being.

Additionally, I enrolled my daughter in karate – something physical to help her feel in-touch with herself as a physical being, to help her feel more comfortable with herself, and safer out in the world. At home, we NEVER talked about the trans issue directly. I would talk sometimes about stereotypes and how not following those didn't change reality – her grandmother is a retired civil engineer and her great grandmother was an early computer programmer. But they were still women.

My child is proof that therapy works, and has a place in this discussion. My daughter has ended up with an ADHD diagnosis, and ASD characteristics. She fits the profile of who this affects almost perfectly. She has black & white thinking, is less conforming, highly intelligent, but a little bit of an odd duck. She ended up on a few social media/art sites that I've since learned are hotbeds of trans "recruitment," for lack of a better description. However, she was lucky – we managed to avoid any cross-sex hormones, no surgeries, and she's come back to herself, stronger than ever, a fact I'm grateful for every day. She's

healthy, smart, ambitious, and continues to find herself, which in her late teens is all typical and expected.

Now, as a 21-year-old young woman, she has options for her future, which she may or may not take. That's her decision when the time comes. I felt my obligation as her mother was to ensure that those options were available to her, that she didn't box herself in and remove future possibilities that at 15 she had no idea she might want in another 10 or 15 years. All I had to do was think about how I was at that age, what I thought I knew, and how eventually, I figured out I knew nothing about life and how things might change over time. No 15 year old really does.

Puberty is not a disease, finding yourself shouldn't require medical intervention, especially not for minors. There are simply too many co-factors that can influence how children come to perceive themselves, perceptions which are fleeting, temporary. But, hormones and surgery can cause permanent damage that can never be taken back. I implore you to help protect the most vulnerable among us.