

**Testimony of Ashton Colby
to the
Senate Government Oversight Committee Dec. 6, 2023**

Chairwoman Roegner, ranking member Hicks-Hudson, members of the committee, my name is Ashton Colby. I am a transgender man and I oppose House Bill 68, sponsored by Rep. Gary Click. Completely banning all medical interventions for any individual under 18 with gender dysphoria goes against internationally recognized health guidelines.

I came out as transgender to my family in 2012 over a decade ago. I am an example of what it means to not only physically transition your gender but to thrive in every area of life, including spiritually and emotionally. I could have never imagined that, over a decade later, the intolerance for transgender people like me would grow to hundreds of anti-transgender bills across the country.

There are major mischaracterizations on the realities of being transgender by public policy-makers. There is fear from the false narrative that young people under 18 can just walk into a doctor's office and immediately begin a physical gender transition with surgery and hormone therapy, without intensive due diligence. Even as an adult, the process of getting approved by a doctor or surgeon to begin physically transitioning your gender takes patience, with extensive wait times and letters of approval from multiple health practitioners.

I started the process for gender-affirming testosterone at age 19. The reality is that getting started with hormone therapy took at least six months under the care of a psychiatrist, mental health therapist and endocrinologist. Recently, in 2021, as an adult now in my 30's, the process of pursuing gender-affirming surgery included wait times that were over a year long. It also took three separate letters of approval in order to even get a surgery date scheduled: one from my mental health therapist who has known me since 2012, one from the psychiatrist supervising my therapist, and one from my primary care doctor who has known me since 2015.

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. I have mentored at organizations like Kaleidoscope Youth Center, and teaching transgender youth mindfulness-based emotional resilience skills as a certified yoga teacher specialized in trauma-informed yoga and meditation. It is incredible to see how much gender-affirming care and family support transforms shy youth who can't even make eye contact into beaming kids who light up the room.

One of my closest friends, Landon McNee, is also a transgender man who has submitted testimony against HB68. He came out as transgender nine years ago. When he was 16, he started gender-affirming testosterone with the support of his family. Seven years ago, when he was 17, he got top surgery. He is now a healthy and happy young man, and an example of a thoughtful, strong, spiritual and compassionate man. He is a certified professional coach and absolutely thriving. Thank you for allowing me to testify, I'm happy to answer any questions. Please oppose HB 68.