

Kristina Roegner,

My name is Joan, and I first of all want to thank you for reading and accepting my personal testimony in support of HB68. As a Pediatric RN, and mother of a child who is gender confused, I take great interest in this bill.

Just over 3 years ago, my 15 year old daughter came to me in complete emotional distress, stating she was feeling confused about her gender. It was the start of the COVID pandemic, when social media use was at an all time high. Prior to that I saw signs of her personal struggle when she asked to cut her long hair, and changed her outward appearance to what I would call a “sloppy” mode of dress, oversized clothes that hid her tiny physique. Her constant smile and laughter faded. I knew my daughter's mental health was in trouble.

Because of my nursing background, I knew that her mental health was first and foremost needing to be addressed. I watched her closely for suicidal ideations, which she repeatedly denied having. I reinforced that she was loved and accepted for her struggles, and that the best way to handle her feelings was through a trusted psychologist or counselor. I chose to speak the truth of who she is, a female. We talked about biology, science, and DNA as being the identifiers of one's sex. I never once led her down a path of lies that the rest of the world seems to feed into our children. A person is not born in the wrong body. My daughter's body was completely healthy. It was her mind that was in distress.

My next challenge was to find a psychologist who could address her mental health without leading her down the path of medical transition. That was simply not going to be an option for our family or my daughter. As a medical professional with an oath to do no harm, I was and still am vehemently against altering a healthy body for the sake of an unhealthy mind.

Luckily, her pediatrician became a trusted friend throughout her journey. I can honestly say that with counseling, and speaking truth to my daughter, I have successfully helped her mature through some of her feelings of gender confusion. Even her pediatrician has told me this, and admits there is another approach that works and isn't yet recognized- it's called watchful waiting. Yes, we have had our bumps along the way. And I wish I could say she is completely healed from her gender dysphoria. I remain hopeful.

As a parent, I have needed to find extreme patience with this process. It is not a quick fix, and I have made mistakes. But what I have done right is now reflected in my daughter's shift towards healing. I have poured myself into researching this issue, and have drawn the conclusion that waiting is the absolute best thing to do for a child. Ask any detransitioner and they will tell you the same. Psychotherapy is the answer, not medical transition.

I thank you again for listening to my testimony. I will continue to pray for our children, and for all of you.

In Peace,

Joan Michaels

State House District 61

State Senate District 19

Congressional District 12