

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill 68, otherwise known as the SAFE Act.

My name is Kelly Wagner, and I am a current resident of Ohio. Growing up, I experienced emotional distress partly because of gender identity disorder, but I desisted, as most adolescents do. Studies have found that upwards of 85-95% will desist or find peace with their natural biological sex without medical intervention.^{1 2} That means there are desisters all around you! You probably have no idea who they are because people like me don't usually share these personal things, but I have been watching what our society is doing to innocent children, and I cannot remain silent.

Although I am an adult now, I would like to ask you to imagine what would have happened to me if I had been a child growing up today in 2023. Around the tender age of 6, I experienced a childhood trauma. As a result, I endured pain and confusion. Shortly after, I found refuge in athletics and eventually became a star athlete. I spent most of my time playing sports and working out. However, I hated my body and developed multiple eating disorders—far too many to detail in this short time. I entered lesbian relationships; I thought I was born that way and was gender non-conforming. I often dressed in men's clothing and wore men's cologne because it was more comfortable for me. I struggled with anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts. At one point, I was so distressed that I left my house with a plan to end my life. And I adamantly told friends, "I hate my breasts, and one day I WILL get a breast reduction!"

That was all I knew about at the time. What if I was exposed to the seeds of this new dangerous gender ideology that kids are exposed to today almost everywhere and repeatedly, especially on social media? Remember that years ago, we did not have personal computers, internet access, personal cell phones, or social media. What would have most likely happened to me in school? In my counseling sessions? At my doctor's appointments? I am so glad that no one ever told me I needed to die as a healthy female and live as a male to fix my body hatred, anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts! I know without a doubt that I would have been very vulnerable to this deceptive line of thinking, and I would have taken any medication prescribed by a doctor to bring me peace of mind.

Shockingly, 98% of children who start puberty blockers will advance to cross-sex hormones and other treatments!³ If 85-95% of children eventually identify with their biological sex when they go through puberty naturally, why are we mutilating, castrating, sterilizing, and medicalizing so many children for life, when a large majority will grow out of their temporary distress? Puberty can be challenging, especially for young girls; the changes can be highly uncomfortable, unusual, and distressing. I know firsthand. But puberty is a natural and normal process, not a disease.

¹ Cohen-Kettenis PY, et al. "The treatment of adolescent transsexuals: changing insights." J Sex Med. 2008

² World Professional Association for Transgender Health, Standards of Care, Version 7, p. 11.

³ <https://www.npr.org/2022/10/26/1131398960/gender-affirming-care-trans-puberty-suppression-teens>.

I have heard doctors in this new gender field share that for most kids, the distress about gender will shift with time. One of these doctors stated, "I think the challenge is that we're not able to definitively predict for whom gender dysphoria will continue and for those that it may not continue."⁴ These experimentations could have severely damaged me.

Every day, I am increasingly thankful I had time to grow up! At 24 years of age, I decided to leave my LGBT identity behind, and I pursued the emotional healing and wholeness my hurting heart desperately longed for. Thankfully, I stopped my earlier suicide plan and called a loved one for help instead. However, if I had medically transitioned without getting to the root issues of my problems, it scares me to think there is a possibility I might not be here.

Today, I stand before you as a woman who desisted from confusion and found true peace. And because I have my whole authentic body, I can enjoy the good gift of sexual intimacy with my husband. Unfortunately, there are others who once had healthy bodies, but now they are damaged and cannot function normally.

I want to stop momentarily and ask those of you who have children; can you imagine your life without your beloved children? Without your precious grandchildren, if you have them? Is it ok to wipe out children's future generations and family legacies? Children cannot understand the long-term consequences of these permanent life-altering decisions!

I strongly urge you to act swiftly to protect children in Ohio from harmful experimentation. Please vote in favor of this good bill, House Bill 68, otherwise known as the SAFE Act. Thank you for your time today. I welcome your questions.

⁴ <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/growing-up-trans/>.