

James Richter
Lewiston
LD 380

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee.

Thank you for this opportunity to address the Committee. My name is James Richter. I'm a resident of Lewiston and I am here as a concerned citizen and a close relative of a young person, currently living in a different state, who began hormone therapy to affirm his gender identity at the age of 17, fortunately with the consent of his parents. He prefers to remain anonymous given the increasingly unsafe environment for transgender people in the country.

I am here today to state my opposition to LD 380.

LD 380 would take away access to gender-affirming care for teens without permission of a parent. First, I would like to say that many young people with gender dysphoria, such as my relative, suffer severe anxiety and often engage in self-harm or even suicide because they feel so ashamed and uncomfortable within their own bodies. In such cases, gender-affirming therapy can save lives. If the young people feel their parents would know and disapprove, they may avoid such therapy. Even in the case of my relative, his parents and even his therapist were initially skeptical about his condition, because he suffered from other issues as well, but came to accept it after months of working with him on the issue. Thus, I agree that undertaking therapies with potentially irreversible effects, such as extended hormone therapy, should be undertaken by minors only after careful screening by a medical professional, both to ensure the young person truly suffers from gender dysphoria, and that they are mentally prepared for life after transition. Indeed, I believe that the accepted practice for endocrinologists is to withhold any such treatment without a written recommendation from another medical professional as well as the consent of the child's parents or other adults responsible for their care. To this extent, the law is unnecessary. In the early stages, though, they should be able to explore the issue with a professional without the parents' knowledge. Also, unfortunately, there are cases where parents might refuse to recognize the condition due either to ignorance or prejudice, and indeed I know of one case where a parent threw his child out of the house rather than accept his gender dysphoria. In such cases, the child is condemned to continued severe mental distress, with the potential for continued self-harm and possibly suicide. I believe these cases are fairly rare, but the mental health of the young person requires that they be given the right of confidentiality.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills. Thank you!