

Cayford, Edna

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Subject: Testimony in Opposition to L.D. 227

This message originates from outside the Maine Legislature.

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 227

by Abigail Hannington

March 5, 2024

Good afternoon Senator Bailey, Representative Perry and distinguished members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee. My name is Abigail Hannington and I am a 21-year-old constituent of Brewer. I am writing concerning L.D. 227, which supports gender-affirming and reproductive healthcare without both parents' knowledge and consent. I strongly oppose the bill and ask that you take my thoughts as a young person into consideration.

As a part of Generation Z, I've grown up witnessing the evolution of gender theory, defined as "the rejection of any relationship between biology and gender as 'biological essentialism.'" While gender theory is itself ideological, gender dysphoria is a mental health symptom that may lead to severe depression and anxiety.

Gender dysphoria is, therefore, distinct from depression and can be experienced for a number of reasons. Young people are very impressionable. Various philosophies and ideologies can attract them and profoundly influence their behavior. While a mental health professional is responsible for determining whether a real mental health problem is present in a child, the child's parents should maintain the right to this information. Healthcare is defined as 'efforts to maintain, restore, or promote someone's physical, mental, or emotional well-being.' The implications of gender-affirming 'care' concerning minors are not consistent with this definition since children under 18 years old are not yet capable of making educated, life-altering medical decisions that involve potential sterilization and other major physical and psychological health effects. Likewise, it places excessive emphasis on mental health at the expense of physical health.

The purpose of the law is to regulate the practices and services of the community and to ensure the efficacy of such practices. No mental health professional attempting to treat a child with gender dysphoria should ever encourage surgeries and prescribe medications that will permanently alter their reproductive health in an attempt to restore their mental health, especially without both parents' knowledge and consent. **Efforts made to restore a child's mental health should never be done at the expense of their long-term physical health.** A parent should maintain the right to discuss with a mental health professional whether a minor's mental health can be effectively treated, at least until the age of 18, without resorting to non-reversible medical intervention. Because **depression** is often the effect of gender dysphoria that prompts one to get help, **the answer to this question should always be yes.** There are countless medications and therapies available to treat symptoms of depression and anxiety. Sterilizing procedures on minors are, for this reason, invasive, unethical, and unnecessary, and parents have the right to protect their children from these unethical medical practices.

As a 21-year-old who knows many transgender individuals under 18 who have received hormone therapy and have undergone invasive surgeries to take on the appearance of the opposite sex, I firmly believe the vast majority of these cases are ideologically and philosophically influenced. **Gender theory is attractive to young people searching for a sense of self and worth in the community.** Thus, such procedures and medications are often desired by minors for purely aesthetic and social purposes. They have yet to understand that trends are transient while medical procedures, especially those performed on the sexual organs, have permanent and life-altering effects. Given their invasive nature, such procedures will inevitably alter the child's ability to engage in relationships as an adult. If cosmetic plastic surgeries and tattoos are illegal for minors without parental consent, why should the standards of 'gender-affirming care' be any different?

For these reasons, I strongly oppose LD 227 and implore you to vote against it.
Thank you for your consideration,

Abigail Hannington
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