

Written Testimony, Dr. Ximena Lopez.

June 21, 2023

Dear Senators of the Judiciary Committee,

I am a pediatrician trained in pediatric endocrinology. I have been providing gender affirming care to transgender youth for more than 10 years in Texas. I have also published scientific research that shows that gender affirming care improves the psychological wellbeing of transgender youth.

I am here today to be the voice of my patients and their parents because In TX and in other states where bills banning gender affirming care are being passed, the lives and future of transgender youth are at risk.

The parents of my patients are debating whether to flee their state amidst high financial, family, and social costs. The effects of the campaign of misinformation that led to these bills are also having chilling effects beyond health care access. My patients and their parents are suffering from discrimination at school, at church, at social gatherings, everywhere. Many families unable to leave the state are pulling their children out of school and isolating them, living in hiding.

The general public should know that a campaign of misinformation has falsely demonized health care for transgender adolescents, which is based on more than two decades of research and clinical practice and is accepted as established medical care by every leading medical organization in this country, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, and many others. There is no professional medical organization involved in the care of transgender youth that opposes this care.

Gender affirming care does not involve genital surgery in minors and no medical interventions are provided before the age of puberty. Gender affirming medical care consists of puberty suppression after the onset of puberty, which then may be followed by hormone therapy in later adolescence.

In accordance with the Endocrine Society, American Academy of Pediatrics, and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, this treatment can be medically necessary and lifesaving. This care is based on a careful, individualized assessment of adolescents with significant and persistent gender dysphoria which, when left untreated, predictably causes serious harms, including anxiety, depression, suicidality, and other negative physical and mental health impacts. In contrast, research has shown that when these youth receive the medical care they need, they can thrive.

This care is not “pushed” by doctors or parents, it is a highly complex decision that involves mental health providers, that includes assessing the stability of the gender identity over time and the maturity of the adolescent to assent to treatment.

Importantly, the parents I see in my practice, which is true of practitioners across the country, come from all backgrounds, including conservative and religious ones.

My patients who are supported by their parents and receive timely gender affirming care often have no mental health issues and they thrive.

I also want to speak up on behalf of science and medicine. Gender health providers and hospitals are being attacked by extremists. Politicians are deciding how medical care should look like with disregard of patients, parents, science, experts and legitimate medical societies. Banning this care also risks the advancement of this medical field and its research. This is a dangerous precedent for our society as a whole and harms us all.

Banning gender affirming care interferes with the ethical principles of medicine which includes patient autonomy, do no harm, and to provide the best treatment available. Physicians are being left to decide whether they should violate their medical ethics or break the law.

I ask that the complex medical decision of whether to receive gender affirming care is left to parents, patients and their health providers.

Sincerely,

Ximena Lopez, MD

Dallas, TX

References:

Standards of Care Guidelines on Gender Affirming Care for Youth:

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2. World Professional Association for Transgender Health:

Coleman, E., et al., Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People, Version 8. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 2022. 23(sup1): p. S1-S259.

Research Studies on Gender Affirming care in Transgender Youth:

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12. Olsavsky, A.L., et al., Associations Among Gender-Affirming Hormonal Interventions, Social Support, and Transgender Adolescents' Mental Health. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2023.
13. Chen, D., et al., Psychosocial Functioning in Transgender Youth after 2 Years of Hormones. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 2023. 388(3): p. 240-250.
14. Arnoldussen, M., et al., Self-Perception of Transgender Adolescents After Gender-Affirming Treatment: A Follow-Up Study into Young Adulthood. *LGBT Health*, 2022. 9(4): p. 238-246-246.

15. Schagen, S.E.E., et al., Efficacy and Safety of Gonadotropin-Releasing Hormone Agonist Treatment to Suppress Puberty in Gender Dysphoric Adolescents. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 2016. 13(7): p. 1125-1132.

Position Statements from National Medical Societies on Gender Affirming Care for Youth:

1. American Medical Association. [AMA to states: Stop interfering in health care of transgender children | American Medical Association \(ama-assn.org\)](https://www.ama-assn.org)

2. American Academy of Pediatrics Position Statement on Bills that Harm Transgender Youth.

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5. American Psychiatric Association Position statement on Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth.

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