

CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE, OF TEXAS

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE HEARING STATEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION AND LIMITED GOVERNMENT

HEARING ON "THE DANGERS AND DUE PROCESS VIOLATIONS OF 'GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE' FOR CHILDREN"

JULY 27, 2023



- Thank you, Chairman Johnson, and Ranking Member Scanlon, for the opportunity to address the importance of gender-affirming care for children.

Majority Witnesses

- Paula Scanlan, Univ. of PA swimmer
- Chloe Cole, de-transitioner
- Dr. Jennifer Bauwens, Center for Family Studies
- May Mailman, Ind. Women's Law Center

Minority Witnesses

- Shannon Minter, Legal Director for Lesbian Rights
- Myriam Reynolds, Parent of trans child

- We need to discuss the real dangers that come with not providing gender-affirming care, the fact that it invalidates the existence of trans youth, and the current LGBTQ+ youth mental health crisis.
- In 2021, about 42,000 adolescents in the U.S. were diagnosed with gender dysphoria.
- Gender dysphoria is a distressing experience for youth that occurs when they experience a mismatch between their biological sex and gender identity.
- When gender dysphoria goes unaddressed, it can lead to anxiety, declining grades, depression, self-harm, eating disorders, substance abuse, and thoughts of suicide.
- Last year, more than half of transgender and non-binary youth seriously considered suicide, and 1 in 5 attempted suicide.
- All major medical associations – including the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry – agree that gender-affirming care is clinically appropriate for children, and access to this care can have significant mental health benefits.
- Gender affirming care comes in many different forms, but at the root, supports the individual to align their body and experienced gender, producing improved quality of life, body satisfaction, and mental health among transgender youth.
- Misconceptions around gender affirming youth care are common and it is time to set the record straight.

- The increase in the number of referrals to gender affirming care clinics is attributed to the fact that more transgender youth feel safe enough to live openly and authentically.
- The growing acceptance of transgender people has reduced the stigma of being transgender and that elimination of stigma has made it safe for transgender people to seek support and care.
- The term “Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria” is not a medically recognized diagnosis.
- The general medical consensus is that puberty blockers should be introduced as a treatment for those experiencing gender dysphoria, once puberty has started, rather than before puberty has happened, anywhere from ages 9 to 14.
- Puberty blockers and hormones are safe, effective, and completely reversible.
- Puberty blockers can provide enormous relief for trans youth suffering with dysphoria as they stop the body changes associated with their birth assigned gender.
- Puberty blockers also allow space and time to think and get ready for the hormones that will change their body in line with their gender identity.
- The health care transgender youth receive is a decision that they should be able to make in consultation with those who know them and their medical needs best—their parents, therapists, and doctors—not by politicians in Congress.
- Nationally, the number of minors receiving permanent surgery is infrequent, and do not represent trans youth as a whole.

- In fact, the general medical community does not recommend or advocate for permanent surgery before the age of 18.
- **Numerous peer-reviewed studies show that transition-related regret is extremely rare, at about 1% on average.**
- One of the key contributors to the high suicide rate includes barriers to appropriate healthcare and community support.
- The University of Michigan identified a total of 271 gender-affirming clinics in the nation that serve an estimated 300,000 trans youth ages 13 to 17.
- About half of them live more than an hour away from the nearest clinic providing gender-affirming care, and a quarter of trans youth live more than a full day's drive away.
- My home state has by far the most egregious legislation against gender affirming care.
- Texas lawmakers have proposed nearly 70 anti-LGBTQ bills, including more than 40 bills that specifically target transgender and nonbinary youth — far more than any other state.
- **Republican officials in Texas initiated child abuse investigations into the parents of trans children who were receiving gender-affirming medical care.**
- These bans strip parents of their ability to support their children in making informed healthcare decisions—in coordination with their healthcare providers—that let them live and be their authentic selves.

- In Texas, the number of LGBTQ young people that have contacted crisis hotlines seeking support increased more than 150% compared to the same time period in 2020.
- Emboldened by the Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, Texas Republicans are working hard to defund healthcare institutions like Planned Parenthood, that serve transgender community.
- In the coming months, Trump's ultra-conservative appointee to the federal court in Texas, Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, will hear a case that would bankrupt Planned Parenthood completely and fund the anti-abortion group, the Center for Medical Progress.
- This case, *Doe vs. Planned Parenthood*, is a baseless aim to shut down Planned Parenthood, and would have devastating consequences for patients, including trans youth.
- As a reminder, defunding Planned Parenthood, does not just mean defunding abortion, contraception and gender affirming care, it means defunding:
 - maternal care,
 - cancer screenings,
 - vaccines,
 - education,
 - rape counseling,
 - fertility care,
 - STD testing,
 - HIV services,
 - hormone therapy for menopause treatment,
 - and it means taking affordable healthcare options away from low-income communities.
- We cannot afford to cut funding for Planned Parenthood, and we cannot afford to tolerate transphobia that will only exacerbate the transgender suicide rate.

- In addition to medical services, transgender and nonbinary youth have expressed fear over losing access to sports that provide important acceptance in their lives.
- A study found that a majority of LGBTQ young people (nearly 66%) do not actively participate in sports — citing fear of bullying and discrimination as a key factor for not participating.
- Trans students already face increased risk for poor mental health and suicide and banning them from sports will only contribute to feelings of isolation and stigma.
- It can be hard to understand what it means to be transgender, especially if we do not know a trans person personally, but we can all agree that trans kids should be treated with the same respect as everyone else.
- As a mother, I know how much it hurts when a child is made to feel other and I know that trans kids want to participate, learn, be healthy, and be included, just like any other kid.
- Abandoning parents in need, isolating our children from the community, and opposing service providers that give life-saving care is leaving devastating impacts on this generation.
- There is overwhelming evidence that shows that gender-affirming healthcare, supportive parenting, and an inclusive community improve outcomes across the board for young people.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics showed a 60% decrease in moderate and severe depression in trans youth who received gender-affirming care and a 73% decrease in suicidality in trans youth.

- Fatal violence also affects the trans community, and disproportionately affects trans women of color.
- In 2016, it is estimated that, while the overall murder rate for the U.S. was 1 in 19,000 per year, the murder rate for Black transgender women was 1 in 2,600, more than seven times as high as that of the general population.
- Now more than ever, we need protective legislation, and we need leaders to listen and support trans voices.
- This is why I am introducing the “Chyna Gibson Stop the Transgender Murder Epidemic Act”, not only to remedy the wrongs and injuries caused by discriminatory legislation, but also to make recommendations to Congress on addressing the perpetuation of transphobia.
- Chyna Gibson was a Black transgender woman who was murdered in New Orleans in 2017 and her death signifies the dangerous reality America’s vulnerable trans population faces.
- Chairman Johnson, I believe in equality for all children, no matter what they look like, no matter what they wear, no matter how they speak.
- I know that we can all do better for our country.
- I urge my colleagues to sign onto the “Chyna Gibson Stop the Transgender Murder Epidemic Act” and prioritize trans youth in need of gender-affirming healthcare and community support.

- I urge my colleagues to listen to marginalized voices, combat the legislation that will exacerbate youth suicide, and be on the right side of history.
- We must send a message to trans young people that they deserve the same opportunities as their peers and to live their lives without fear of being treated differently for who they are.
- Thank you. I yield back the remainder of my time.