

## Opponent Testimony of SB76

For the Senate Education Committee

2/10/25

Candice N. Moran, Psy.D. - Licensed Psychologist, MO & KS

Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee,

I am Dr. Candice N. Moran, and I am a Psychologist working in Kansas City, KS. I have been working with transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming individuals and in University Mental Health Centers since graduate school in 2010. I have received extensive training and continuing education in transgender and nonbinary mental health and gender affirming care, and I am a nonbinary person myself. I currently primarily work at a higher educational institution for future healthcare providers, many of whom are also queer, trans, and nonbinary. I am also a mom of a nonbinary elementary student who has given me permission to share how this bill would negatively impact them.

My child shared their nonbinary identity with us at age 5, and they have been out at their school since kindergarten. They have experienced a lot of support from family, friends, and their therapist, and when they are in an affirming environment they are thriving. When they experience bullying, threats of violence, and misgendering, they experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, trauma, and more. According to the GLSEN 2021 National School Climate Survey, 67% of Kansas LGBTQ+ Students regularly heard school staff make homophobic remarks, 80% heard school staff negative remarks about someone's gender expression, and 88% heard negative remarks about Transgender People. (GLSEN, 2021). Also in Kansas, almost 50% of transgender and nonbinary students have experienced gender-based discrimination at school (GLSEN, 2021). As a mom, I want to do everything in my power to have my child's story turn out differently, including sitting here and asking you to believe the science, believe the research, and believe the lives and stories of the many people of Kansas who are telling you that this would be harmful to them.

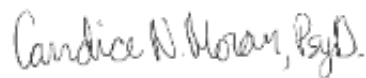
School is one of the major areas of most children's lives. They spend 30-40 hours per week, so what happens in those spaces has a huge impact on their mental health. Children are supposed to be focused on learning - to read and be able to explore and be introduced to many new places; math - for basic life skills and to further their analytical skills; science - to learn how the world works and spark new innovations; history - to learn from the past and how not to repeat it; and many more things. Instead of being able to be focused on their studies, the transgender and nonbinary students of Kansas are having to worry about their physical safety, their emotional safety, and simply being seen and respected for who they are. What about these children's rights? SB76 focuses on the "rights" of teachers, staff, and students to misgender, be disrespectful, and bully transgender and nonbinary students, and under this bill, there is NO ramification for the students who have ACTUALLY BEEN HARMED by the outcome of these actions. SB76 isn't about protecting religious freedoms or the freedom of speech, it's a free pass for bullying, discrimination, and harassment. Repeated misgendering of students is a Title IX violation, and serious physical and mental health consequences for the individuals being

misgendered. Misgendering and other forms of invalidation and non-affirmation can trigger dysphoria, rumination, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and body dissatisfaction; the impacts of which can lead to depression, hypervigilance, impaired social functioning, suicidality, and disordered eating (Barr et al., 2022).

As a psychologist who has worked in higher education for 12+ years, I can say that this legislation would also negatively impact many of the students that I have worked with over the years and continue to work with today. College students are adults, and this bill is another pathway to erode their legal protections and rights, infringing upon their civil liberties and Title IX rights to be able to engage in their academic programs. When students of any age are having to focus on their basic needs, including physical and emotional safety, they are unable to fully engage in their education and the learning process. I have worked with students who would rather skip class, risking their education and grades in the process, rather than subject themselves to being misgendered on a daily basis, and I have supported them in that decision as the one that was needed for their mental health at the time. The “discomfort” that you’re talking about for teachers and other students to “be forced” to treat others with the basic respect of using their name and pronouns correctly does not compare in any way to the pain and trauma that transgender and nonbinary folx experience on a daily basis.

86% of transgender and nonbinary youth say recent debates around anti-trans bills have negatively impacted their mental health (Trevor Project, 2023), and it has been shown that youth suicide rates in states that have enacted at least 1 anti-trans law have increased as much as 72% (Lee et al., 2024). Please show the transgender and nonbinary youth of Kansas that you care about what happens to them and you actually want to do what you claim to want to do, which is to protect them from harm. Thank you so much for your time today. Please vote no on SB76.

Thank you,



Candice N. Moran, Psy.D.  
Licensed Psychologist, KS & MO  
They/Them/Theirs  
Kansas City, KS  
House District 31  
Senate District 6  
Submitted via email on 2/7/25.

## References

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