

Opponent Testimony of SB 76
For the Senate Education Committee
February 10, 2025
Michele A. Montour, Private Citizen

Simply put, this bill is encouragement to bully children. It serves no beneficial purpose to children. It's intent is another step in the predatory process of trying to attack and erase transgender children. It is patently morally wrong.

Would those backing this bill write a law to allow disrespect and bullying of a child with any other disorder or congenital issue? It is just this group of vulnerable kids that compose 3.3% of children. The focus of this cascade of bills is disproportionate in its negative attention to a vulnerable population. How many groups in this state face these many bills attacking them? Why aren't you focusing on *helping* children? When 20% of children in this state are food insecure, why aren't you introducing bills to feed them? Why aren't you addressing the issue of guns in schools? There have been nine incidents in Kansas schools since 2020. The health, development, and mental health of a measurable amount of this state's children would be improved. The taxpayers of this state would approve of this sort of move. Meanwhile, the attacks on transgender children are the product of hostility and discrimination born from extremist thinktanks after the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision recognized marriage equality. They could no longer persecute one group so they switched to another, more vulnerable one. This time they attacked a group that could not fight back on their own. They cannot even vote. It was a nefarious move that has millions of dollars incentivizing it. Meanwhile vulnerable children suffer.

Transgender children have no choice in who they are. It is not a phase and it is not externally generated. The medical and scientific classification of sex and gender has long recognized more than two genders. But other cultures have recognized this for over 3000 years. Transgender people have always existed. Proponents act like this is something new. It is not. They act like their malice is justified. It is not. It is cruel. These are children. No one would choose to be in such an attacked group and endure the pain you are placing upon them. The only choice here is yours.

Transgender children are extremely vulnerable and face problems that are so much more prevalent than in their peers. They are experiencing gender dysphoria impacting their mental health. Simply looking in the mirror may be antagonistic to their mental health. Can you imagine looking in the mirror and seeing an image that does not mesh with who you know you are? It is a daily battle. So much of that day is in school where they should feel as supported in their identity as their peers. What actual impact does using a pronoun or name for a child have for educators and others in schools? None. It is a simple request with a major impact for the transgender children. It is a kindness. It impacts their wellbeing. Where using a name or pronoun has no negative impact on educators in schools, prohibiting it and penalizing those that respect the child is damaging to the transgender children.

These children have alarming mental health issues. Their rates of depression and anxiety are three times that of their peers. Even more shocking and frightening is the suicide rate that is three times that of their peers. At or above 30% of transgender children are suicidal. Where these children are 3.3% of the student population, transgender kids are 12% of the suicide deaths. A truly disproportionate number. It's heartbreaking that they are suffering to this level. Studies have found that merely this push of bills is damaging in itself. They internalize it. They are not oblivious. They feel like prey in a process that is out of their control. Their mental health worsens. Even if you fail in this attempt, the damage has been done. If you pass it, they suffer more from what you have done.

On average, six hours of a child's day is spent in school. That is almost the equivalent of a part time job. They have no control over their environment. Can you imagine spending this time being forced to endure not having your actual identity acknowledged and respected? Can you imagine other people not only being able to misgender and use the name and pronouns but also bully you on the basis of who you are. Not only are they allowed to bully you but stopping them can be a cause of action in court. This means they are left unprotected and as prey to the worst intentions and prejudiced aggression of those in a charged environment. Can you imagine facing this every day with no recourse or protection?

Transgender students already feel a disconnect in the school environment and are three times more likely to miss school because of bullying and not feeling accepted. Peer harassment is already

pervasive. Eighty-five percent of trans students already report harassment but you want to make this worse and remove any protection. Seventy-five percent feel unsafe at school because of their gender expression (compared thirty-two percent of cisgender boys and twenty-three percent of cisgender girls). You will make this worse because there are no repercussions and actually penalizes intervention. Why do you want to make their lives worse? They already feel removed and you want to forbid teachers from helping or accepting them as they are. One-third of them will drop out. You will make this worse.

Please tell me why you are persecuting children that are already at such risk. Why do you want to hurt them? Why do you want to take children that are three times more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, and suicidality and make their existence worse? You should be against bullying but you are promoting and fortifying it. You would not do this to any other group. Tell me why you want them to suffer. Why do you want to create an environment where a child will be in further danger? Why do you want to remove the right of teachers and administrators to show respect and support of kids? These professionals often have a connection and understand these kids on a level you will. You will never witness what these kids experience but these teachers have to witness it and you are making them contribute against their will. Any support these kids have will be removed and the abuse they face will be encouraged. Do you know what happens when a student feels their life is unbearable and unsupported? Your actions will have tragic consequences.

Who are you trying to benefit? Who gains from this? There is only pain and suffering. You are encouraging bullying. Would you do this to any other group? Do you think you will force them to change? There was a false report years ago that you might hear today. The actual percentage of transgender people *as a whole* that detransition or change their minds on their identity is only 8% (eight) and two-thirds will retransition. Only 3% regret but do not detransition. Of kids on puberty blockers, only 1.9% did not want to continue on their transformation. Does this sound like this is a phase? Do you really think you know better than the real statistics? Do you think you know better than the AMA? You're listening to biased sources that are not operating on solid medical fact. Listen to the voice of reality and

experience. You are harming kids who cannot fight back – and you are rewarding those that will hurt them. It is disturbing.

So, please reject the bullying of children. This should not be a controversial point. No child should be devalued and bullied for any reason. They should be allowed to develop into who they are meant to be without your judgment. This bill is framed and authored to fit an agenda and is meant to target a vulnerable group.

Think about your impact and vote no on this bill.

Sincerely and respectfully,

Michele A. Montour
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