

TO: Madam Chair Senator Gossage and Members of the Kansas Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
FROM: Aaron Lackamp MD
DATE: January 28, 2025

ORAL PROPONENT TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF SB 63, THE HELP NOT HARM ACT

Madam Chair and members of the committee,

Thank you for taking time to consider my testimony in favor of SB 63, the Help Not Harm Act. I am a physician practicing intensive care medicine in the state of Kansas. I have cared for two young patients who have attempted suicide after having sex reassignment surgeries and those patients sustained severe neurologic injuries as a result. I strongly disagree with the assertion that sex reassignment surgeries will be an effective or proper method of suicide prevention for our youth.

More effective means of suicide prevention for youth should be enthusiastically pursued such as support for suicide prevention hotline and suicide prevention resources.

The justification for sex realignment surgeries in children would be that some children may be born with a gender identity that does not match their sexual identity. This is an almost a religious belief and leads to circular reasoning. The debate over the relative importance of "nature vs nurture" in human behavior extends back at least 150 years to Francis Galton's 1875 publication of "The history of twins, a criterion of the relative powers of nature and nurture". This debate has had ebb and flow over the years as currents in society change, but misplaced emphasis on inborn natural traits has brought us social catastrophes such as eugenics, phrenology, and social Darwinism. We should expect the tides of thought to change over the years in our endless search for truth in science. Furthermore I reject the absolutist position that human characteristics are either fully inherited or fully developmental. With regards to the development of an embryo there is a constant interplay between the organism and its environment. With regards to the development of complex human characteristics, including behavior, the effects of nature versus nurture are likely inseparable due to complexity.

Children need to be protected. They also need to be protected in order to allow them to learn, grow, and develop. Children naturally explore their identity through childhood, adolescence and adulthood. An important part of learning is trying new things, making mistakes, changing our mind, and learning from our past. I fear we will restrict children's freedom to learn and explore if we lock them into identities socially reinforced by others' perceptions of them. The worst transgression would be permanently altering their bodies during childhood.

It is important to ensure adequate access to services for marginalized members of society. Fostering a nurturing environment where individuals can become the best versions of themselves does not require surgery. This bill should not prevent anyone from fostering a respectful supportive environment contrary to information I have seen posted on the internet. Upon reading of the text of the bill section 4 the penalties are enforceable for section 3a and 3b, which includes chemical and surgical measures to attempt to align the child's appearance with their stated self perception.

Thank you for receiving my testimony. I am available for questions by email or phone.

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Sincerely,

Aaron Lackamp MD
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