

Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

January 26, 2025

House Bill 2071

Elise Flatland

Testimony format: ORAL, In Person

Testimony in Opposition

Private Citizen

Madame Chairwoman Gossage and members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony to you. I am a volunteer lobbyist with Equality Kansas but this testimony is on behalf of my family. My name is Elise Flatland and I am a resident of Kansas. My husband and I have 4 children, all of them were born and raised in Kansas. Two of my children are transgender and are currently receiving gender affirming care. This is my testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 63.

My youngest son, since he was a toddler, has been the happiest child I've ever known. My husband and I nicknamed him Sunshine. His joy was infectious and he never knew a stranger. He could command a crowd of people, adults and children alike, and the whole room would be full of laughter.

When he was in 4th grade, 10 years old, this all came crashing down. My son would wake up crying most mornings. More often than not I would have to physically carry him into school, sometimes while he was fighting me not to go. I would take him directly to the school counselor's office and she could usually get him into the classroom at some point in the morning. That winter we found cuts all over my son's legs and arms. He had been cutting himself with scissors. All sharp objects were secured in our house but I still found new cuts. He confessed that when he had a hard day at school he would take scissors to the restroom and cut himself there. Immediately, a safety plan was put in place at school and my son had to be searched before he went to the restroom. After months of agony for our whole family, I received a call from school. The school believed they could no longer keep my child safe from himself and needed a mental health evaluation before returning to school. I took my son to the ER, where he was admitted to a psychiatrist hospital for suicide risk. I had to leave my baby in the care of medical professionals.

We knew he was not doing well, but the hardest thing for my husband and I was hearing that we could not keep him safe from himself. After a week in a mental hospital, diagnoses, and medications my son was on the road to recovery. It was a hard journey, not only were we all having to learn how to care for his emotional well being, my son was also trying to figure out who he was. We will never forget the day my husband picked our son up after school and he said he had had the best day ever. He had told his class he was a boy and asked them to call him by a new name. That is when everything started to change. When my son's mental health was stabilized he was then diagnosed with gender dysphoria. We then found a doctor who specialized in gender affirming care.

Today, my son now knows who he is and he knows he is loved, respected, and supported not despite of who he is but because of who he is. My son has spent the last two years building his life and finding his joy again. Now the Kansas legislation wants to come between a doctor and a child and his parents. The government wants to dictate that my child should not receive medical care because of his diagnosis. This bill would not ban the medication and the treatment, the bill would single out children with gender dysphoria and prevent them and them alone from getting this medication.

My husband and I are appalled that this bill would take away our parental right to make medical decisions for our child, especially when we have seen firsthand the impact those decisions have on their wellbeing.

For my children and the other families this will affect. I urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 63.

Elise Flatland