



Jan 26, 2023

Vermont Legislature House Judiciary Committee

Testimony in support of H 89, an act relating to civil and criminal procedures concerning legally protected health care activity

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Good morning Chairperson Lalonde, Vice Chair Burditt, and members of the House Judiciary Committee. I am grateful to all of you for the opportunity to be here today to show my support for H 89, an act relating to civil and criminal procedures concerning legally protected health care activity

My name is Dr. Erica Gibson and I am a pediatrician with a specialty in adolescent medicine. I currently serve as the Division Chief of Adolescent Medicine at the University of Vermont Children's Hospital where we run several adolescent medicine clinics including the UVM Children's Hospital Transgender Youth Program.

Today I am speaking not only as a physician who provides direct care to youth and their families but also as an official representative of the University of Vermont Health Network, a member of the Executive Board of the Vermont Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and as a member of the Vermont Medical Society.

In April 2021 as attacks on youth gender care began to escalate in both public forums and state legislatures the VT Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, UVM Children's Hospital, the Vermont Medical Society and multiple other VT health organizations released a comprehensive memo that addressed the importance of the provision of thoughtful, comprehensive, developmentally appropriate, family centered gender affirming healthcare as recommended by evidence based healthcare guidelines. That memo reiterates the fact that every major medical organization in the United State recognizes the medical necessity of gender care for improving the physical and mental health of gender diverse people. We have submitted a copy of that memo along with this testimony.

Unfortunately as I speak to you here today almost 2 years later, numerous other state legislatures have passed or are attempting to pass discriminatory laws that aim to prevent young people and families from accessing appropriate gender care and also seek to penalize gender health care providers for providing this care. To quote a pediatric colleague of mine who testified against one of these bills in Ohio these bills are "an extreme rejection of safe and effective medical treatment for a vulnerable group of youth" and they "enact barriers that would cause families irreversible harm, and ultimately cost lives" In addition these discriminatory laws in other states place my pediatric colleagues in the ethical dilemma of refusing evidence based care for gender dysphoria or face loss of medical license or criminal charges for providing this care.

We are thankful that the state of Vermont has remained steadfast in support of gender diverse Vermonters and their families; and the care that we provide to them. I would like to acknowledge the important joint resolution that was passed by the Vermont legislature in June 2022 to "support transgender youth and their parents who seek essential medical care for the treatment of gender dysphoria." At this time in a mounting

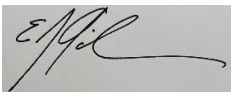
crisis of child and adolescent mental health care it is essential that care for gender diverse youth and their families is protected and that the providers providing this evidence based care are protected also.

We have heard numerous stories about the frustration and fear that our colleagues are struggling with across the country.

- In states where this care has been outlawed some providers are watching rates of depression, anxiety, self harm and suicide increase before their eyes while they are unable to provide the vital health care that their patients and families deserve
- In other states providers are stepping down from important positions at highly respected academic medical institutions because the state political climate will not allow them to provide the evidence based care that they have been trained to provide.
- In all states where discriminatory legislation is active hundreds of providers are taking time to present testimony alongside youth, families and allies in order to provide the facts about the importance of this care; and as a result many are suffering private and public verbal and physical threats from opponents.
- In addition many of the specialists in this field have been prevented from traveling and speaking at important international clinical care and research conferences due to threats to their own safety.
- And anyone that provides this care routinely receives both veiled and open assaults on their personal and professional intelligence and competence through direct and indirect messages assailing our clinical acumen and training.

This bill will provide crucial protections for healthcare providers and expand the ability to safely care for young people and families that seek evidence based legally protected healthcare in our state.

We thank you for your commitment to the health and wellbeing of anyone seeking healthcare in Vermont and on behalf of our patients and families, and the multiple professional medical organizations that I represent here today, we respectfully ask the Vermont House to pass this bill.



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