



Women's Declaration International

Testimony of Liza Cowan

Before the Vermont House Health Care Committee
H. 659

OPPOSE

March 21, 2022

Thank you, members of the House Health Care Committee, for allowing me the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of H. 659. My name is Liza Cowan. I reside in South Burlington, Vermont..

I have voted Democrat in every election I've been eligible to vote in, but I am increasingly disgusted by my former party's push for 'gender identity' to be enshrined in law at the expense of women's and girl's sex-based rights. I have spoken to many long-time Democrats who feel the same.

Women's Declaration International (WDI) is a global nonpartisan group of volunteer women dedicated to protecting women's sex-based rights; and [WDI USA](#) is its U.S. chapter. [The Declaration on Women's Sex Based Rights](#) (the Declaration, hereafter) was created by the founders of WDI to lobby nations to maintain language protecting women and girls on the basis of sex rather than "gender" or "gender identity." The Declaration re-affirms women and girls' sex-based rights and challenges the discrimination we experience from the replacement of the category of sex with that of "gender identity."

I am writing to you as a signatory to the Declaration, and as your constituent. As of today, the Declaration has over 30,000 signatures globally, from 157 countries.

It has long been understood in the area of human rights that the stereotyped sex roles of men and women are a fundamental aspect of women's inequality and must be eliminated. Saying that some boys are actually girls because they adopt the stereotypes that are typically associated with the female sex is, therefore, a human rights violation.

Article 1 of the Declaration on Women's Sex-Based Rights reaffirms that the rights of women are based on the category of sex. It asserts that governments should maintain the centrality of the category of sex, not "gender identity," in relation to women's and girls' right to be free from discrimination.

My interest in H. 659 is also based on Article 9 of the Declaration, "Reaffirming the need for the protection of the rights of the child." This is in keeping with Article 3 (1) of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children](#), which states: "In all actions concerning children . . . the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration." The Declaration reads: "States should recognize that medical interventions aimed at the 'gender reassignment' of children by the use of puberty suppressing drugs, cross-sex hormones and surgery do not serve the best interest of children. Children are not developmentally competent to give full, free and informed consent to such medical interventions, which carry a high risk of long-term adverse

consequencesStates should recognize that medical interventions aimed at the ‘gender reassignment’ of children . . . are emerging harmful practices as defined by Part V of the Joint General Recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/General Comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices.”

H. 659 would permit the administration of medically unnecessary drugs that inhibit puberty or alter secondary sex characteristics on a minor. In addition, it would permit this unnecessary medicalization without the knowledge or consent of the child’s parents, whose responsibility it is to protect a child from immature and dangerous decisions. Because of the high risk of both long-term and permanent adverse consequences of these procedures, and the developmental inability of children and adolescents to give full, free, and informed consent to such interventions, I strongly oppose this bill.

What has been well established is the tendency for the vast majority of children to outgrow discomfort with their sex if they are allowed to go through puberty, and that the majority of these children tend to become gay or lesbian adults. A [study](#) from 2021 showed an 88% recovery rate for boys, and there are other studies showing similar results.

Puberty is a natural and necessary stage of development, bridging childhood and adulthood, and human beings cannot change sex. To prevent the onset of a natural and necessary developmental stage, in pursuit of something impossible, should not be permitted in law. The use of Lupron has never been approved by the FDA for the purpose of making a child appear more like the opposite sex; and its [adverse effects](#) include [seizures, bone loss, and mood disorders](#). Adverse effects of cross-sex hormones include [heart disease, cardiovascular damage, and deep vein clots](#).

H. 659 relies on the Trevor Report to argue that medicalization can prevent suicides in minors who seek it. But nothing in the report relates a reduction in suicidal ideation to medical interventions, so this should not be used as a basis for overriding parental consent for either puberty blockers or cross sex hormones.

Minors do not have the same [capacity](#) as adults to comprehend long-term consequences, and should not be allowed to make decisions that have permanent negative effects on their health and lives without parental consent. Dr. Stephen Levine, an eminent psychiatrist in this field, recently published an [article](#) critical of the informed consent model for children, emphasizing the potential and documented harms of medical interventions in young people aimed at disguising their sex. I encourage legislators to read the entirety of this article as it addresses the arguments I have made in this testimony much more broadly and refutes the commonly repeated claims of extreme suicide risk in children and adolescents.

Just as it is accepted that children cannot consent to tattoos, piercings, or sterilizations, it should be self-evident that children cannot consent to such permanently damaging treatments as so-called puberty blockers, wrong-sex hormones, and mutilating surgeries. This type of medical harm to children is contrary not only to the Declaration and to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, but also to the core values of any decent society. It is central to any concept of human rights that children be allowed to grow to natural, healthy adulthood, and I strongly urge you to oppose H. 659.

Liza Cowan, Signatory to the Declaration on Women’s Sex-Based Rights