

Dear Committee Members,

I am a former “trans” kid. I started identifying as a boy in 1st grade after a brutal sexual assault.

I have no doubt that if I had the option to take puberty-blockers and cross-sex hormones, I would have done everything I could to obtain them, including threatening suicide.

In the short term, it would have been so much easier to kill myself as a girl and attempt to become a boy with puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and surgery, rather than work through the difficult feelings related to my trauma.

Initially, I probably would have felt better.

Testosterone is a controlled substance and almost anyone who takes it initially feels a sense of euphoria. It would have boosted my confidence and increased my energy.

It would have allowed me to completely dissociate from myself as a girl and create a new persona who could pretend that the horrible trauma that triggered my gender dysphoria didn't happen to me.

But in the long term, it would have reinforced the mistaken belief that caused me to develop gender dysphoria:

That it was too dangerous to be a girl.

If I had been medically transitioned, I wouldn't have gotten the help I needed to work through my fear, self-hatred, and shame.

I never would have realized that my transgender identity was a coping mechanism. I have talked to dozens of detransitioners who were not so lucky, like those sharing their stories with you today.

I am grateful to the therapists who helped me understand that my gender dysphoria was a result of the sexual assault not because I was inherently flawed or born in the wrong body.

Puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones allow children to avoid facing their problems, whether that be grappling with homophobia, struggling with autism, or trying to recover from a significant trauma.

It is our job as adults to give children the message that no matter how intense and difficult their feelings are, they can work through them without dissociating from themselves to become a different person, irreversibly damaging themselves in the process.

We know that encouraging children to run away from their pain and struggles is not a good solution, even if it makes them feel better in the short term.

It is natural for children to do what they can to shut down difficult feelings, which is why we have policies to stop them from self-medicating with drugs and alcohol. We need similar policies to protect children from the dangerous effects of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones.

Because of loving, caring, and supportive adults, I got the therapy I so desperately needed as a child.

Therapy gave me the gift of healing and I am so incredibly grateful.

I urge this committee to provide the children of North Dakota who are struggling with gender dysphoria the same gift.