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Re: Assembly Bill 2218

As a California licensed psychologist licensed since 1995, I am aghast at the thought processes behind this bill, the effect of which will be to normalize a troubling condition that has always been understood as a mental disorder. As with syndromes and conditions such as Body Dysmorphia, Anorexia Nervosa and paranoid psychosis, Gender Dysphoria represents for some, a deeply rooted conflict between a person's beliefs with reality. For others, it is a passing phase.

"Gender affirming" therapy does not obviate suicidality as has been claimed, but may, in the long run, increase it. A study in Sweden, a highly affirming LGBT country, found that the suicide rate among those having completed gender - reassignment surgery was 19 times that of the general population.¹

Such an approach ignores a century of theory and research on the psychological and brain development of children and adolescents. We have long understood the capacity for wise choices and abstract reasoning is related to the development of the prefrontal cortex -- which is still growing by the late teens. Younger children jump to all kinds of conclusions about life or themselves. They might, for example, believe that their parents' divorce is their fault. Or that they deserved to be beaten or molested. We do not sell alcohol to minors. We do not allow children to watch R-rated movies or tell us when their bedtime should be. How in God's name would you pass this bill which *demand*s that a child be "affirmed" that they belong to the opposite sex? Moreover, it demands taxpayers pay for medical interventions that are not only unproven but dangerous?

The affirming approach leads to life-long painful medicalization, dependence on drugs, permanent sterility, increased cancers and cardiovascular disease, the destruction of healthy genital and breast tissue as well as in many cases, deep regret. Kids are highly impressionable! To affirm their self-identification reifies it, reinforces it and sends them on a deadly path. Without such "affirmation," the great majority accept their natal gender by their late teens.

Finally, lawsuits in the UK have already begun. One 23 year old is suing his doctors because, as a minor, he did not understand what he was demanding and was not able to give "informed consent."

Please, reject this bill.

J. Michael Kuiper, PhD

¹ Dhejne C, et al, "Long-Term Follow-Up of Transsexual Persons Undergoing Sex Reassignment Surgery: Cohort Study in Sweden," journals.plos.org, Feb. 22, 2011.