

Rev. Dr. Isabel Call, Private Citizen and Pastor
Opponent Testimony of SB 12
For the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
February 14, 2023

Members of the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee,

I am a grateful and proud citizen of Kansas and a member of the clergy. I am writing to testify against SB 12, which criminalizes medical treatment for trans children and young adults under age 21.

All the treatments for youth that would be criminalized by this bill are evidence-based, safe, and reversible. Doctors recommending them are held to the highest professional standards and backed by the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry — all organizations which support these treatments. I support families whose doctors recommend these treatments for their children. And I support young adults, aged 18-20, in making their own medical choices without the interference of the government. Without these options, we know that we will lose trans people to mental health crises and suicide.

This is not just personal for me. It is also a matter of religious freedom. I am ordained within a tradition, Unitarian Universalism, that affirms that living one's identity is part of our free exercise of religion. Our faith has publicly called for transgender-affirming actions for over three decades. Trans, nonbinary, and intersex people are a cherished part of our religious community. While I speak for myself in this letter, I know many if not all of my congregation would agree with my perspective.

I invite you to consider the physical and emotional violence that threatens not just trans people, but everyone in our culture. It's considered completely normal for some to wear dresses and some to raise their voices in anger. If the "wrong person" does these things, they risk harassment or assault. In this climate, it's no wonder that some kids who don't identify with the sex they were assigned at birth want medical intervention to help them stand out less.

But we are all harmed by a culture of bullies. As a woman, gender norms have prevented me from speaking up for myself. This has put me in harm's way and made it more difficult to make a living wage. I see how gender norms inhibit the men in my life from accessing their emotions. This robs me of the care they might offer me, and puts me at risk if they act out in violence. I cannot speak for them, but all of the men I know have struggled with the weight of unmanageable expectations of what "real men" should be like.

I wonder what the world would be like if trans kids weren't afraid. It is the responsibility of the adults in their lives, including the adults representing them in government — you — to make a safer world for them and all of us. Instead of limiting the agency and treatment options of trans people, I beseech you to help create a culture where all people are respected, regardless of their gender presentation. Please oppose SB 12.

I hold you with compassion and with accountability as you consider this highly consequential matter.

Sincerely,
Rev. Dr. Isabel Call
Manhattan, KS