

Ursula Smith - Long version in Support of the SAFE ACT

I am the grandmother of 2 girls that I was given DeFacto guardianship of after their parents abandoned them at the ages of 6 and 9. I raised them for seven years. Before coming to live with me, they experienced a very unstable and, at times, violent home life. The girls went years with very little to no contact with either parent. Their mom was absent due to drug and alcohol addictions. Their dad, my son, was absent due to restarting a relationship with a former girlfriend and starting a new family. The girls continually felt the pain of abandonment, as both parents randomly came in and out of their life. Plus, when we would have "sister" weekends with their half-sisters, the girls would hear about how involved their dad was with their half-sisters and wonder why he didn't spend time like that with them. That deepened their hurt. All through my guardianship of the girls, they were in counseling to get mental and emotional help they needed to cope with the abandonment and rejection of their parents.

After a few years, my older granddaughter, Melody was diagnosed with a life threatening illness and had to spend extended time periods in the hospital. My younger granddaughter, Marcy, spent a lot of overnights at a friend's house during her sister's hospital stays. During Melody's health crisis, Marcy bonded with her friend, as both a close friend and an emotional support person. Suddenly, Marcy's demeanor started to change and she lost interest in the things she had cared the most about. She was hospitalized at Children's Hospital for one week after her counselor diagnosed her with suicide ideation. As soon as she was admitted her attitude suddenly changed. She perked up and was smiling and cheerful. She referred to being there as being at camp with all the activities and making new friends. Shortly after she came home from the hospital, she shared with me that she was gay. I recognized that this was a confusing and stressful time in her life. I tried to seek additional counseling for her but she became angry with me and withdrawn. The girls' mother was released from rehab and wanted custody so the girls could live with her. Marcy's mother supported and encouraged her being gay. The girls wanted to live with their mom and started to act out. It reached a point where I felt I could no longer

parent them and I didn't fight their desire to live with their mom. I decided to sign an agreed order to change guardianship to their maternal grandmother.

Marcy was hospitalized again for suicide ideation and for cutting herself. About two months after they moved, Marcy shared with me that she was transgender and wanted to be called by her chosen boy name. She just turned 15 when she started seeing a counselor in the transgender clinic at Children's. She was given hormone treatments to stop her periods and she bound her breasts so she wouldn't develop any more. A few months later, she was put on testosterone treatment to transition into a boy. She shared with me that her counseling sessions were to help her live in a society that does not accept transgender people. Marcy's depression therapy was refocused into transgender treatments. All of the treatment for her previous abandonment and rejection trauma was dropped. Her maternal grandmother legally changed Marcy's entire name to her chosen boy's name. Everything that was Marcy was erased.

I raised her for 7 years and not once did Children's Hospital Transgender Clinic ask my opinion regarding her past traumas, which was severe enough for her to be hospitalized multiple times. Now I don't know what will become of her and I worry about what this is doing to her future fertility and overall health. I think back on the days she was with me all the time. She never showed any signs of thinking she was a boy. She dyed her hair lilac purple and wore flowers in her hair. She loved to wear dresses and go to spa days with her sisters. She enjoyed being a cheerleader and played in her school's marching band. She was happy for the most part and loved to sing, act in plays, and play violin. She had an infectious smile and a charismatic personality. She loved people and they loved her. Totally different from the Marcy of today. I am devastated that I have no relationship with her, but I am considered an enemy because I didn't go along with her transitioning to a boy. Everything she was, they changed. I am doing everything I can to wait and try to help her through her life.

The last I heard she was saving up for a bilateral mastectomy, yet she's in a relationship with a boy (biological male) and has left home to live with him. I just don't understand. . I think there is more to her story than suddenly wanting to be a boy and there is no evidence that this has improved her life. In fact, she remains mostly isolated and has a dark outlook on life. Now at 18, she barely graduated from high school, is living with a boy-friend (biological male) and not pursuing her dreams.

Studies show that the safety and efficacy of puberty-suppressing drugs and cross-sex hormones used on adolescents to support transgender affirmation therapy is at best highly debated. There is a lot of research that shows that some of the cross-sex hormone treatments are irreversible especially in younger children (Marcy just turned 15 when she was put on the hormone treatments). Although there is agreement on both sides of the debate that 80%-95% of children with gender dysphoria accepted their biological sex by late adolescence, affirmation therapies interfere with this process. Additionally, there are harmful physical effects from taking the hormone treatments, such as lifelong infertility, higher rates of suicide (Marcy was hospitalized 4 times [to my knowledge] for cutting herself and planning suicide). Since sex is determined by the chromosomes in each cell of the body, there is no actual sex change. At best, the hormone treatments can only help kids transition to a more realistic **impersonation of the opposite sex.**

I strongly feel that my granddaughter's life would have been much different if she had not been encouraged to start these transgender treatments. I feel that she needed better guidance to understand how her body and emotions were affected by her childhood traumas and feelings of rejections instead of rushing to attempt to cover up who she really is and who she is meant to be. And what if she ever marries and wants to have children? What then?

I am here today because I am horribly distraught and worried about future children being treated without addressing the real issues and their real problems that seem to be blatantly disregarded by

professionals who should know better. They should be doing everything they can to preserve the bodies of young people and their fertility, not encouraging the removal of healthy body parts. Turning these children into lifelong medical patients is not the answer. The hospital should not be changing reality to fit a child's mind or anyone's personal perception of reality, they should be forming the child's mind to fit reality. The world is upside down!