



INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR  
THERAPEUTIC & COUNSELLING CHOICE

May 24, 2024

**Re: Opposition to AB 1955 as Amended: Parent Secrecy Act**

Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am a California licensed psychologist representing the International Foundation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice for which I am an Executive Board Member, the U.S.A. Country Representative, and the Chair of the Science and Research Council. We train and serve professionals in California and in about 35 nations regarding the care of individuals of gender and sexuality diversity and of traditional Christian faith.

We are deeply concerned about the serious harms that would come from AB 1955 as amended that would deprive children of essential parental care. AB 1955 requires school personnel to hide important information from parents about their child's gender identity or expression or sexual orientation.

It is parents, not the school, who can understand their child's gender identity or sexuality in the context of the child's overall medical, mental health, and life experience history. Parents, not the school, are responsible for the care of their child every day of the week and year. Parents must be involved to obtain professional assistance for a child or adolescent experiencing gender incongruence, to provide accurate diagnosis, and to treat any gender dysphoria or other co-existing conditions.

Unwarranted fear of parents who do not affirm gender discordance has been based on research that is of disappointingly poor quality such as the annual, non-representative, Trevor Project surveys that claim parent support for sterilizing children with cross-sex hormones decreases depression and suicidal thoughts and attempts. The best available research, as rated by an international systematic research review commissioned for the National Health Service (NHS)-England and conducted by the University of York, suggests it is family functioning and peer relationships that are associated with psychological functioning in gender dysphoric children, regardless of whether the parents support steps toward transitioning. (Hall et al., 2024, Figure 2 on p. 3, for Cass, April 2024, Figure 33 on p. 161)

Reluctance of parents to affirm discordant gender identity in their child has scientific support. The World Health Organization itself will not include children or adolescents in a gender identity guideline it is planning, because the research basis on children and adolescents is "limited and variable". (WHO, 2024) An independent review commissioned by the National Health Service (NHS)-England has completed the most comprehensive review ever of gender affirmative care and found that research for social and medical transition of minors is not scientifically supported, based on multiple systematic research reviews that are considered gold standard and other mixed methods research covering social transitioning (by name, pronouns, and dress), puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, clinical guidelines on which transitioning has relied, clinic practices, and more. The review found medical interventions for young people do change bodies—potentially permanently, pose serious health risks, do not overall improve mental health, and may not resolve gender distress. (Cass, April 2024) In addition, several large, prospective, longitudinal, registry studies of entire population

the U.S. and European countries have largely found that affirmative interventions do not improve mental health and may worsen it. (Haynes, 2024) England, Sweden (National, 2022; Society, 2022) Finland (Council, 2020), and Denmark (Lohde, 2023) have moved away from medical interventions and toward psychotherapy for treating gender dysphoria. More European governments are actively studying moving in the same direction. The United States and California governments and professional organizations are lagging behind the research.

Consistent with these findings, research also does not support a necessity for LGBTQ+ identity affirmative schools. A GLSEN study that provided sufficient comparative data showed that private religious schools that used none of the affirmative methods GLSEN recommends—LGBTQ+ identity affirming curricula, clubs, website access, library resources, textbooks, teachers, administrators, or policies—were ranked by LGBTQ+ identified students as among the safest for them. These religious schools had fewer anti-LGBTQ+ remarks among students than in public schools and the least victimization and bullying of any schools. In fact, there was less evidence of bullying in private religious schools than in private non-religious schools that used all the GLSEN-recommended LGBTQ+ identity affirmative educational methods. (Kosciw et al., 2017, Appendix 2)

Mounting research shows individuals who experience same-sex attraction but do not take an LGB affirming identity, many of them traditionally religious, are no less happy, mentally healthy, satisfied with life, and flourishing than those who do take an LGB affirming identity. Some of these findings are from an ideologically diverse research team. (Barrington & Gay, 2020; ideologically diverse research team: LeFevor et al., 2019; 2020; Rosik et al., 2021)

Children have a right to the protection and care of their parents. Under the U.S. Constitution, parents have a constitutional right to direct the upbringing and education of their children, free from undue interference by the state.

In California, teachers have been suing school districts that require withholding information about a child's gender incongruence or sexuality from parents and that require teachers to deceive parents. Teachers have been winning on U.S. Constitutional grounds. (Mirabelli v. Olson, 2023) If AB 1955 is passed, there will be lawsuits. California politicians have increasingly passed laws that require educators, professionals, and insurers to hide information from parents about their child. Since parents' rights are a U.S. Constitutional right, a lawsuit may progress to the Supreme Court of the United States and address this dangerous pattern at the national level.

As for CA likely voters, 72% say parents should be notified if their child identifies as transgender at school. AB 1955 will not stand legally, but if passed into state law, politicians who vote for it will be on record for having attempted to take away parents' rights from their constituents—California parents.

Respectfully,

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Executive Board Member, U.S.A. Country Rep., Chair of the Science and Research Council,  
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