

January 18, 2021

To: Montana House Judiciary Committee

From: Matthew C. Brower, Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference

Re: Testimony in support of HB 113

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Montana Catholic Conference. I submit this testimony in support of HB 113 on behalf of the Roman Catholic bishops of Montana.

All persons regardless of gender identity deserve the respect and dignity that is theirs as human beings and should be treated with the same compassion and love to which all persons are entitled. Tragically, minors experiencing gender dysphoria are all too often pushed to the margins of society and denied their inherent dignity. Because this increasing population of young people is so vulnerable, it is essential they have access to appropriate and effective care.

Clearly, there is a need for effective treatment modalities. However, the exact causes of gender dysphoria, the risks and benefits of various proposed medical treatments and the long-term success of these treatments in addressing suicides among this population are not yet adequately understood within the medical and scientific communities.

Significantly, there is evidence suggesting a large percentage of children who experience gender discordance will resolve on their own through puberty. In addition, there are risks associated with both puberty blockers (low bone density, altered adult height and impaired special memory) and cross-sex hormones (infertility, cardiovascular disease, stroke, etc.).

It is also important to note that while some claim these medical interventions are necessary in response to the extremely high rate of suicide among young people experiencing gender dysphoria, there is research suggesting that such interventions do not provide a mental health benefit over the long-term or resolve the problem of suicide commission.

We realize this is an emotionally-charged issue and understandably so. The bullying, ridicule and isolation experienced by our youth with gender dysphoria is both real and reprehensible. These young people need and deserve our unconditional love and support.

Given the serious and irreversible impact of some of these medical interventions and the questionable long-term benefits associated with such, we urge the medical and scientific communities to conduct further research regarding the causes of and appropriate treatments for gender dysphoria. Only then can we hope to provide these vulnerable young people effective and lasting treatment options that allow them to thrive and embrace the unique gift God has created each one of them to be.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, on behalf of the Montana Catholic Conference, I recommend a “do pass” on HB 113.