



February 21, 2025

SUBMITTED VIA EMAIL TO:

Judiciary Committee, WV Senate, judiciary@wvsenate.gov

Senate Judiciary Committee members *

Sen. Tom Takubo, tom.takubo@wvsenate.gov

TESTIMONY in Opposition to **SB 299**

The League of Women Voters supports equal rights for all under state and federal law regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability.

SB 299 chooses to single out certain West Virginians seeking gender-affirming healthcare and deny them rights afforded to others. Therefore, we OPPOSE [SB 299](#), which would deny access to necessary healthcare.

We've heard a lot of rhetoric in this Legislature about respecting the autonomy of individuals and families to make healthcare decisions. This bill fails to protect the autonomy of a narrowly defined group of minors and their families.

We've also heard rhetoric about following the science. Again, this bill ignores the science and medical experts.

Regarding the science: Medical professionals who practice in West Virginia already have testified against this bill. Other scientific sources are available to you. We will cite only three, but each reflects the protocols and guidelines of a myriad of medical experts:

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) stated unequivocally in 2023 that they will continue to “ensure young people get the reproductive and gender-affirming care they need and are seen, heard and valued as they are.” Among the guidelines: “In particular, the AAP recommends the following: that youth who identify as TGD [transgender and gender diverse] have access to comprehensive, gender-affirming, and developmentally appropriate health care that is provided in a safe and inclusive clinical space ...” ([Ensuring Comprehensive Care and Support for Transgender and GenderDiverse Children and Adolescents](#), American Academy of Pediatrics, 2018, reaffirmed 2023)
- “We recommend health care systems should provide medically necessary gender-affirming health care for transgender and gender diverse people.” ([Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People, Version 8](#), *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 2022, *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 2022).

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan volunteer organization that encourages informed and active participation of citizens in government. The League does not support or oppose any political party or candidate, but is engaged in local, state, and national issues of importance to our communities. The League works to influence public policy through advocacy and education. League membership is open to all men and women age 16 or older. More at: www.lwv.org (National) and www.lwvwy.org (WV).

- “[More than 20 U.S. medical groups](#) support minors’ access to gender-affirming care, and many, including the Association of American Medical Colleges, [have joined amicus briefs](#) opposing the restrictions.” ([States are banning gender-affirming care for minors. What does that mean for patients and providers?](#) Association of American Medical Colleges, AAMC News, Feb 2024).

But we are perplexed. Why is this Legislature choosing to spend precious time out of your scarce 60 Days on a bill designed expressly to harm an extremely small number of vulnerable children? A similar bill was passed in 2023, with a compromise carve-out permitting gender-affirming care for minors with a diagnosis of gender dysphoria. During debate on the bill, the Senate listened to Sen. Takubo, one of its few members who is a physician. We remember that debate when Sen. Takubo rose to defend children. The compromise was not optimal, but it was far better than the ban that SB 299 is proposing now.

This Legislature has many important policy decisions to make that affect very large numbers of our people – public employees, thousands of children in foster care, families who need reliable and affordable childcare to foster workforce participation, a budget that needs to be balanced, to name just a few items. So, we are perplexed. Why expend your time and efforts on SB 299, which will only serve to impede medical practice and harm children.

And, never forget, these are children far more likely to end their own lives than live without the gender-affirming care they so desperately need.

The League of Women Voters urges you to vote against SB 299. In WV, we need to stop stigmatizing and demonizing our most vulnerable citizens. Please make *Mountaineers Are Always Free* more than a slogan.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,



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