

Does KY GOP believe parents know best? 'Frankenstein' anti-trans bill says otherwise.

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Luka Hein is a Minnesota native with a harrowing tale to tell about a gender transition gone wrong. Hein is what's known as a detransitioner, someone who now regrets the medical care they received to become another gender.

Prisha Mosley also regrets surgery and drugs that have had an irreversible effect on her body. Together, she and Hein are making the rounds of conservative news sites and state Capitols to testify in favor of laws that ban gender-affirming care, although none of their care took place in Kentucky.

Both testified by video on Tuesday in favor of House Bill 470, brought in by Rep. Jennifer Decker, and the national forces that support the bill. They are compelling witnesses, but nothing they said made House Bill 470, now a Frankenstein's monster of mashed up ideas, including Don't Say Gay and a bathroom bill, from the worst elements of the General Assembly, any more palatable.

It's terrible because it will prevent the kind of care that could stop the irreversible treatments, like hormones and surgery, that Mosley and Hein describe. That care is serious therapy and assessment that really gets down to the issue of whether a child is transgender or not. Section 1 of the bill, which is both vague and punitive, would have a chilling effect on providers, who could be accused of violations.

Out of state witnesses to a problem invented by the Family Foundation and the Cato Institute don't get us anywhere, but they have taken up a lot of time that could have been spent on real problems, like a hunger crisis in Eastern Kentucky. As always, why talk about difficult issues when we could metaphorically stomp on some marginalized kids?

House Bill 470 was rewritten to include all of Senate Bill 150 from Sen. Max Wise, who as running mate to Kelly Craft for governor, has to make sure they can check the anti-LGBTQ boxes. It includes pieces from HBs 173 and 177, too, making it a Don't Say Gay bill.

The new House Bill 470 offends every notion of fair play and good conscience, which is not something we see much in Frankfort these days. It is cruel, it further hurts a group of people already bullied and ostracized. As former Republican legislator Bob Heleringer pointed out in testimony on Tuesday, parents are not asking for it. “You’re doing it because you can,” he noted, shortly after saying: “I’ve never seen a bill in 45 years as despicable as this one. It’s a rank obscenity on the people’s branch of government.”

But it’s hopeless to appeal to people’s consciences these days. So they should vote no because it used to be anathema to Republican philosophy of a small government that doesn’t interfere with people’s lives. The only person who appeared to recognize that on Tuesday was Sen. Stephen Meredith, R-Leitchfield, who called the new bill “a bridge too far,” because it did not allow parents to do what’s best for their kids, especially when it comes to mental health.

“Throughout this legislative session, we have promoted bills to promote parents rights,” he noted. “You can’t say this is about parent rights and then it’s not.”

He believes that children should wait until 18 years of age to get this kind of treatment. But that decision “needs to rest with the parent.”

Three GOP Senators, Julie Raque Adams, Whitney Westerfield and Danny Carroll said they were personally “troubled” by the bill and promised changes on the Senate floor. Let’s hope they mean it.

This session’s whole long exercise in bigotry — against trans kids, drag queens and books — has been a waste of everyone’s time. If you really think parents know best, then act like it. The issue of transgenderism is complicated and there’s a lot we don’t know. Go ahead and ban gender surgery for anyone under 18. But the rest of 470 is not the way to protect Kentucky’s children. It hurts them and the parents who are looking for answers.