Written Testimony of Myriam Reynolds
27 July 2023

Good morning. My name is Myriam Reynolds. I'm a licensed professional counselor, a fifth generation Texan descending from a long line of conservative Christians, and I'm the proud mother of a transgender son.

I am honored to be here today to give you my testimony and tell you the story of my incredible child. He recently became an adult and I will still refer to him as my child. His name is Cameron and he is 18 years old. He recently graduated from high school and is embarking on adulthood with a gap year before college.

Cameron told us he was transgender when he was 11 years old. He was clearly dealing with something but we didn't know what it was or how to help him. But then he told us. My husband and I had the same instinct to tell him that we love him no matter what and that we will always be there for him. We knew we needed to affirm him from our years working with foster care youth. We had no idea what to do next. We were scared. We didn't know anyone who had a trans child. We had never even heard of gender affirming care. I prayed that it was a phase, but already knew that it wasn't. The signs had been there all along, we just didn't understand them. We thought he was a tomboy. He refused to wear anything pink or girlie and was the only girl on the boys football team for many years. His best friends were always boys. There were a lot of signs looking back.

As parents, all we really want is for our children to be happy and healthy. Prior to receiving gender affirming care and socially transitioning, my child was not happy and not able to be his true self. I didn't want him to have to face the struggles of being transgender, but I did want him to be happy and himself. At times, I grieved my little girl and felt as if she was gone. It was hard on me at first, but I was able to put my child's needs before my feelings and find him the care he needed. I could see that my child was happier and felt more and more comfortable the more he was affirmed.

We were living in Colorado at the time and through some research found a comprehensive program at a local hospital that provided healthcare to trans kids. We found him a counselor and immediately began trying to provide our child with the best healthcare we could find. We felt very fortunate to have had access to a multidisciplinary team of professionals who could help us figure out what options we had for Cameron's healthcare. I could not imagine having to manage legal restrictions of medical care in addition to talking to our extended family all while learning ourselves about our treatment options and caring for our child.

Later that year, we decided to move to Texas. We began researching leading programs in the field of trans healthcare and we were able to find a similar program. We chose to move to a town based on the proximity to the clinic. We knew we needed the support of experts. We had an appointment scheduled before we even arrived in Texas or had any idea of our health insurance coverage. Our multidisciplinary team at the clinic consisted of physicians, nurses, a

social worker, psychologist, medical students, my son's counselor, the school counselor, my husband and I as parents/decision makers and my son as the patient. We filled out many, many surveys and questionnaires- myself, Cameron and his dad were all required to do so. We had extensive interviews with the social worker and psychologist who had requested a letter from Cameron's previous provider prior to our first appointment. The intake process was lengthy and meticulous. The process was daunting, but I was grateful that the team was so thorough. I want to make it clear that the care we received was slow, very thoughtful, provided with the utmost care and consideration. There was no rush, absolutely no coercion, lots and lots of double checking and making sure we were all on the same page. At the time, Cameron felt it was all moving too slowly. In retrospect, we can see clearly that it was the best thing for us to move so slowly on any medical interventions so we could properly weigh the pros and cons. My son was asked at every appointment if he wanted to stop treatment or if he had any concerns about treatment whatsoever. Counseling was taking place the entire time and Cameron's counselor would also meet with the doctor and my husband and I before medical interventions were decided upon. The interventions my son has had, with extreme consideration, consent and discussion have been counseling, first and foremost, puberty blockers and hormone therapy. We have not even considered any kind of surgery and my child is 18. If any physician or member of the treatment team had suggested surgery to us when Cameron was a child, we would have said no thank you and immediately gotten a second and third opinion.

With the benefit of hindsight, I have no doubt that the healthcare my son accessed was life saving. I am grateful that we had access to this incredibly crucial, medically necessary healthcare for our son without the interference of our government. Cameron is thriving now. He is doing better than he ever has! He has wonderful friends, is dating a little, has spoken out publicly and has the love and support of the whole family including two grandparents who are staunch conservative Christian Republicans. We can all see that this is who he is. The grandparents don't fully understand what being transgender really means, but they love and accept him.

I am asking you today to please allow parents the right to access and consent to healthcare for their children. These decisions should be made with parents, the child, and the child's medical providers without government interference.