Written by **Michael Tennant** on August 20, 2023

Parents Sue Over Washington State Law Letting State Give Gender Treatments to Runaway Kids

A group of concerned parents is suing Washington-state officials over a new law that allows the state to provide gender-transition treatments to runaway children without their parents' knowledge or consent.

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According to the lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court Wednesday by America First Legal (AFL), Engrossed Senate Substitute Bill (SB) 5599, which took effect July 23, "authorizes the state to refer a minor for 'behavioral health services' without defining what that entails, potentially meaning that a minor could receive — at least — mental health services that the parents would not endorse, and arguably also medical treatment that the parents would not authorize. There is no age minimum in SB 5599 for such services."

SB 5599 does this by amending laws regarding minors who present themselves at shelters or host homes.

Prior to July 23, shelters were required to notify parents with 72 hours of their child's arrival at the shelter, telling them, among other things, "the whereabouts of the youth, a description of the youth's physical and emotional condition, and the circumstances surrounding the youth's contact with the shelter or organization." The only exception to this requirement was when there were "compelling reasons" not to do so, specifically, if "notifying the parent or legal guardian will subject the minor to abuse or neglect."

SB 5599, however, added a new "compelling reason": "when a minor is seeking or receiving protected health care services," which are defined as "gender affirming treatment," i.e., drugs or surgery to alter the child's sex-specific characteristics. Such treatments, of course, are life-altering and may lead to sterilization and other complications.

Furthermore, while the law requires shelters to report to the Washington Department of Children, Youth and Families any minors whose parents have not been notified because of "compelling reasons," it may or may not require the department to notify parents. (The verbiage is unclear.) But it most definitely mandates that the department "offer to make referrals on behalf of the minor for appropriate behavioral health services," though such services are not defined anywhere in state law. And it states that the department shall "offer services designed to resolve the conflict and accomplish a reunification of the family," though, again, how quickly reunification is to be accomplished, and under what terms, is not defined. In fact, nothing in the law mandates that the department return the child to his parents at all.

"Remarkably, under the text and legislative history of SB 5599, it appears that parents of children with circumstances indicating that notifying the parent or legal guardian will subject the child to abuse or neglect will still receive notification from the department regarding their child," observes the lawsuit. "In contrast, the parents of children without such circumstances who seek or receive protected health services will not receive notification."

While, as noted, the law itself is vague in spots, the intent of those sponsoring SB 5599 was crystal clear. "The legislative history strongly indicates that the Washington State Legislature intended to

deprive parents of their ordinary parental rights when their child presents at a shelter receiving or seeking 'gender-affirming' treatment," reads the complaint.

State Senator Marko Liis, for example, said, "What this bill speaks to is when a young person is seeking certain essential health care services … to make critical decisions about their future or seeking gender-affirming care in the face of opposition and hostility from their family…. When a family is standing between their young person and essential health care services there, and we need to focus on the essential needs of the young person."

SB 5599 thus makes it much more likely that children who have been conned into the transgender cult will run away from home. Indeed, some of the plaintiffs in the case have children who have threatened to run away because their parents won't affirm the genders they've chosen under surreptitious encouragement from school officials and other adults.

The plaintiffs are asking the court to declare the law unconstitutional under both the U.S. and Washington constitutions for a variety of reasons.

First, the law violates parents' due-process rights by taking their children from them and preventing them from bringing up their children in the way they see fit. In addition, it does not provide equal protection under the law, since parents who don't support their kids' gender decisions are accorded fewer rights than those who do.

Second, it interferes with parents' freedom of speech. Parents who refuse to address their children by their preferred names or pronouns could lose custody of them. Moreover, given that the reunification process is not spelled out, there is a strong likelihood that the state would make it contingent upon parents' affirmation of their child's new gender identity.

Third, it infringes upon parents' religious freedom by forcing them either to accept propositions that run counter to their faith or to surrender custody of their children.

"America First Legal is leading the courtroom charge against radical transgenderism and the sexual exploitation of our children by militant gender activists. No state action more frighteningly illustrates the threat to our children than this law," AFL President Stephen Miller said in a press release. "This sick, authoritarian law essentially allows the state to kidnap children from their parents and hide their whereabouts to surgically and chemically mutilate them — and to formally deprive their parents of any legal ability to stop the medical disfigurement of their sons and daughters by gender extremists targeting their children."