

Hello, my name is Pamela Garfield-Jaeger. I'm a licensed clinical social worker who graduated from New York University in 1999. I've been licensed in California since 2005. My vast experience ranges from working in schools, community programs, hospitals, residential programs and private practice. In addition, I spent 10 years of my career as a clinical supervisor. The bulk of my experience is working with vulnerable children, teens and their families who struggle with mental health issues, which is who we are talking about protecting today.

I have an interesting personal story. In early 2017, I was forced to leave my profession due to a debilitating disability. After four years, I finally returned to my profession in 2021, I was essentially like Rip Van Winkle, who woke up in a completely different world because so much in my profession had changed in those short years. In 2017, there were virtually no trans kids, but in 2021 at the teen program I worked at 1/2 the girls identified as non-binary. It was shocking because those girls were honest about having other issues such as trauma and issues in their families. They admitted to using their trans identities as a way to feel powerful in a world they felt powerless. Imagine being a lost lonely teen and suddenly you could call every adult that wants to tell you what to do a bigot or a transphobe. That feeling is intoxicating. However, it is short-lived and those kids did not get the help they needed because the program insisted on affirming trans identities rather than address their deeper issues.

You might be thinking, but what if they KILL themselves? We must be kind, we must affirm! Affirmative Care Saves Lives! The data says! 1st: we must step back and recognize that anything clinically sound **never** fits neatly in a slogan. We have never had a one-size fits all solution for any other clinical issue. 2nd, lets take a closer look at that data.

There are ZERO studies that prove that affirming a person with a trans identity prevents suicide. none have control groups to make this claim. The only data we have tells us that the transgender population has higher rates for suicide. I agree with that claim because people who identify as trans do have coinciding mental health issues such as trauma, attachment issues, depression, anxiety, the list goes on. The trans community admits this in their data reporting and in their marketing because they even have a special flag for trans identified autistic people. The trans community would say this flag is for inclusivity. I would say this is a way to attract vulnerable kids who struggle socially, don't feel at home in their bodies, feel invisible and spend more time online. These kids get recruited with own special trans flag.

Anecdotally, many trans people say they feel happier when affirmed. They are getting what they want, but we don't know if that is good for them in the long-term. Have they been followed up on 8-10 years later? That's impossible since the explosion of trans kids is relatively new. Children often will say they are happier when they get ice cream for dinner, but does that mean it's right?

A new study came out from Finland found people who received all the trans care had more psychiatric needs both before and after treatment compared to the general population. According to this new study with a large sample size and a longer follow-up, gender medicine does not achieve that life-saving effect the slogan promises.

Data aside, let's think about this from an ethical standpoint. How is it clinically sound to tell vulnerable kids that they WILL kill themselves over and over again if they don't get what they want? All this suicide talk is against everything mental health professionals ever stood for before and it's plain irresponsible. We are setting kids up for a life of emptiness and loneliness because they are getting the lesson that they must blackmail people to affirm an identity to receive love. Children and teenagers should learn that they can not control others, and take personal responsibility. We are telling them we don't believe in them. In addition, they start to believe that they must go through painful surgeries or die. That's a scary message to put on repeat to children. How is that good for anyone?

This trans ideology seems kind and accepting and even fun with all the rainbows and pronouns. But as a mental health professional, I know this is creating more anxiety and stunting youth's ability to connect with others. How are kids supposed to trust others if their friends and teachers are constantly changing identities? How are they supposed to feel stable when they are given infinite choices for who they are, instead of the truth. Have you been to the Cheesecake Factory lately? Imagine a child trying to pick from such a large menu. And what if the menu keeps changing? We are setting our kids up to feel anxious and unstable and we need to stop.

I beg for you to step back and think outside of repeated slogans and what seems like kindness, and recognize that I am here to support this bill because from the bottom of my heart, I want vulnerable children to get a chance to grow up healthy and whole.