



February 17, 2026

The Honorable Julie Gonzalez
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
200 E. Colfax Ave.
Denver, CO 80203

RE: SUPPORT IF AMENDED FOR SB 26-018

Dear Senator Gonzalez,

On behalf of Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, we write advocating for an amendment to Section 2 of Colorado SB 26-018, the Legal Protections for Dignity of Minors bill. We thank you for considering the proposed amendment to this bill.

We share the bill's core goal: transgender children should be safe, supported, and protected in their families and communities. Courts should not be used to punish children for who they are, nor to penalize parents who are acting to safeguard their child's well-being. Our concern with the original language in Section 2 was structural and strategic, not philosophical.

As introduced, the bill directed courts to weigh parents' views about a child's gender identity and related characteristics when determining best interests. While intended to protect transgender youth, this approach creates three serious risks.

First, it risks making affirming parents' cases harder rather than easier. Anti-discrimination principles generally prohibit courts from using protected characteristics as grounds for differential treatment. By instructing judges to explicitly weigh those characteristics and parental beliefs about them, the bill risks reframing a child's identity as a contested evidentiary issue, inviting heightened litigation and adversarial framing.

Second, statutory language is only as protective as its interpretation. A supportive judge may apply identity-specific language to shield a child from harm. A hostile judge could interpret the same language in ways that are harmful for transgender children. Furthermore, this identity-specific language, if found legally defensible, could be used in less welcoming states to support anti-transgender policies and non-affirming parents. In a polarized environment awash in misinformation and confusion, legislation should be written to minimize opportunities for ideological misuse.

Third, Colorado courts already have authority under existing law to consider whether a parent's conduct harms a child's mental, emotional, or physical well-being. If rejecting or undermining a child's identity causes demonstrable harm, courts can already account for that under the





traditional best interests framework. The original language risks redundancy at best and constitutional or interstate complications at worst.

The following proposed amendment, if accepted, could meaningfully improve the provision.

THE ABILITY OF THE PARTIES TO CONSIDER THE CHILD'S WISHES AS IT RELATES TO THE CHILD'S RELIGION, GENDER IDENTITY, GENDER EXPRESSION, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, CULTURE, RACE, ETHNICITY, NATIONAL ORIGIN, DISABILITY, OR OTHER PROTECTED CLASS.

The revised language clarifies that courts may consider the child's wishes regarding gender identity in the best interests of the child analysis. This approach is more durable and principled for several reasons.

First, it centers the child's wishes. The focus shifts from adjudicating parental beliefs to evaluating whether each parent can appropriately consider and respect the child's expressed identity and needs.

Second, it situates gender identity within a broader list of protected characteristics. This reinforces parity across these characteristics and aligns more closely with established anti-discrimination norms.

Third, it reduces the risk of misuse by hostile actors by avoiding language that singles out transgender identity in a way that could invite adversarial reinterpretation.

In short, the amendment will strengthen the bill by grounding it in existing best interests principles, reinforcing equal protection values, and increasing the likelihood that the statute will hold up in court and operate consistently across jurisdictions.

Protecting children requires precision as well as passion. With this amendment, the legislation will be better positioned to achieve its intended goal: keeping vulnerable young people safe and supported within their families.

Thank you for careful consideration of this important matter. Should you have any questions or requests for further information, please contact me at Pelecanos@lambdalegal.org.

Sincerely,

Pelecanos
Staff Attorney
Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, Inc.





cc: The Honorable Members, Senate Judiciary Committee



Statement of Opposition to SB26-018

I am writing to express my firm opposition to **SB26-018**, which seeks to prioritize state-defined “recognition” of minor identity over the fundamental rights and convictions of parents. By elevating state ideology above the family unit, this legislation threatens the very foundation of child rearing and the mental well-being of Colorado’s youth.

The Primacy of Parental Influence and Legal Precedent The state must not penalize parents who hold traditional views on biology and gender. Parental influence is not a privilege granted by the government; it is a fundamental right. This principle was solidified by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters (1925)*, which famously held that “the child is not the mere creature of the State” and that parents have the right and high duty to recognize and prepare their children for additional obligations. Stripping or limiting this influence because a parent’s convictions diverge from state-mandated views is a direct violation of this established constitutional precedent.

International Evidence and Long-Term Mental Health We must also look to the international community, which is currently course-correcting. The **Cass Review** in the United Kingdom—a comprehensive independent review of gender identity services—concluded that the evidence for medical and social interventions for minors is remarkably weak. This has led the UK to roll back identity-based protections in favor of more holistic, parental-centered care. Colorado should not be codifying a path that other nations are now abandoning due to the rising number of detransitioners and the realization that the developing adolescent mind requires parental guidance, not state-enforced affirmation.

Constitutional Violations Furthermore, SB26-018 presents a clear violation of the **First Amendment**, infringing upon both the **freedom of speech** and the **free exercise of religion**. To compel parents to speak or act against their deeply held convictions is a bridge too far for a free society. We must consider the long-term consequences:

- **Mental Health Risks:** Forcing a wedge between parent and child during formative years can lead to isolation and long-term psychological distress.
- **Irreversibility:** The state is an inadequate substitute for a parent’s nuanced, lifelong knowledge of their child.

I urge this committee to respect the sanctity of the parent-child relationship and uphold the constitutional protections that ensure parents remain the primary advocates for their children’s welfare. I strongly urge a “No” vote on **SB26-018**.

Nicholas Roseveare



February 2026

To: House Judiciary Committee
Re: HB26-1052—Rights for Victims of Certain Crimes

Dear House Judiciary Committee Members:

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) is one of the oldest women's organizations in the country, empowering women since 1881. The mission of AAUW is to advance equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy. More than 700 community leaders are members of AAUW branches around Colorado.

AAUW has led the fight on women's health and safety issues, and we have made progress over the years. Yet there is still work to do. Senate Bill 085 adds protections for victims, specifically for military members and families.

SB085 will allow military Protection orders (MPO) to be admitted as evidence when applying for temporary protection from abuse in civilian court. Victim advocates will be able to tell their clients a MPO *will* be admissible in court instead of telling their clients it *should* be admissible. SB085 will also encourage information sharing between the military and local law enforcement.

For these reasons, AAUW of Colorado strongly supports SB085 and requests your AYE vote in committee and throughout the process of becoming law.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Su Ryden". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hon. Su Ryden
AAUW Colorado Advocacy-Director

16699 E. Kentucky Ave.
Aurora, CO 80017
303.898.5797
suryden25@gmail.com

American Association of University Women--AAUW is a top-rated 501(c)3 charitable organization whose mission is to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.



ATLANTIC CITY
NEW JERSEY

BALTIMORE
MARYLAND

BILOXI
MISSISSIPPI

BOSTON
MASSACHUSETTS

CHICAGO
ILLINOIS

COEUR D'ALENE
IDAHO

DALLAS
TEXAS

DETROIT
MICHIGAN

HONOLULU
HAWAII

HOUSTON
TEXAS

DES MOINES
IOWA

KNOXVILLE
TENNESSEE

MIAMI
FLORIDA

MILWAUKEE
WISCONSIN

NEW YORK
NEW YORK

PHILADELPHIA
PENNSYLVANIA

SACRAMENTO
CALIFORNIA

SALEM
OREGON

SAN FRANCISCO
CALIFORNIA

SANTA ANA
CALIFORNIA

SEATTLE
WASHINGTON

ST. PAUL
MINNESOTA

TRI CITIES
WASHINGTON

TUCSON
ARIZONA

WILMINGTON
DELAWARE

WINSTON-SALEM
NORTH CAROLINA

February 4, 2026

Colorado Senate Judiciary Committee
Colorado Legislature
200 E. Colfax Ave
Denver, CO 80203

Re: Senate Bill SB26-018 – Oppose

Dear Chair Weissman and Honorable Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

The Pacific Justice Institute (PJI) is a national non-profit law firm focusing on the defense of religious freedom, parental rights and other civil liberties. As the PJI's staff attorney in Colorado, I write in opposition of SB26-018. While there may be compassionate intentions behind this legislation, SB26-018 poses profound ethical, societal, and legal risks that undermine the free exercise of religion and the fundamental liberty interest of parental rights to the care and upbringing of their children as ensconced in the United States Constitution and Supreme Court jurisprudence.

BACKGROUND

Colorado Senate Bill 26-018 (SB 26-018), introduced on January 14, 2026, is titled "Legal Protections for the Dignity of Minors." The bill amends state law in two key ways: It requires courts to suppress records related to name changes for minors under 18 (unless the minor has a felony conviction), limiting public access and online publication; and it mandates that family courts, when determining parenting time and decision-making responsibilities, consider whether parents "recognize the child's identity as it relates to a protected class" under Colorado law, which explicitly includes gender identity and gender expression. While framed as promoting minor dignity, this provision effectively prioritizes parents who affirm a child's self-identified gender in custody disputes, potentially disadvantaging those who do not due to medical, psychological, religious, or conscientious reasons.

This letter in opposition contends that SB 26-018 is unconstitutional and is detrimental as public policy. It violates parental rights under the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause, infringes on First Amendment protections for free exercise of religion and free speech—echoing recent U.S. Supreme Court rebukes of Colorado's overreaches—and endangers children by favoring ideological alignment over holistic well-being. The bill also risks exploitation of its language in acrimonious custody battles and deepening family rifts. For these reasons, SB 26-018 should be defeated.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

We will predominantly focus here on the constitutional and related legal implications of SB26-018, and address separately several policy considerations that should be considered in rejecting this bill.

- I. Constitutional Violations**
 - A. Infringement on Parental Rights Under the Due Process Clause**

The Supreme Court has a long track record of protecting fundamental liberty interests of citizens from government interference—even those that are not specifically enumerated in the Constitution. One such fundamental liberty interest is directing the upbringing of one’s children. Supreme court jurisprudence has repeatedly affirmed such a right as protected under the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

In *Troxel v. Granville* (2000), the Court reiterated that “the liberty interest at issue in this case -- the interest of parents in the care, custody, and control of their children -- is perhaps the oldest of the fundamental liberty interests recognized by this court.” The Court emphasized that fit parents are presumed to act in their child's best interests, and state intervention must be narrowly tailored to a compelling interest. SB 26-018 disrupts this presumption by injecting state-mandated scrutiny of parental beliefs on gender identity into custody decisions, allowing courts to favor affirming parents without proof of harm or parental unfitness.

Under existing Colorado law (C.R.S. § 14-10-124), courts already evaluate a child's best interests comprehensively, including safety, emotional needs, and parental support. Adding a specific factor for identity recognition singles out one viewpoint, enabling the state to penalize non-affirming parents and potentially separate children from fit and capable caregivers. This oversteps bounds, as the Court in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925) declared that “the child is not the mere creature of the State.”

Lastly, outside the family law custody battle setting, the language in the bill could constitute a body of evidence that not affirming a child’s transgender identity could be taken to mean that a parent is not “fit.” The natural extension of the state considering such non-affirmation as evidence of “unfitness” is that the state could attempt to cite non-affirmation as evidence in proceedings for state custody of the child in favor of a more “fit” guardian who does affirm such identity.

B. Violation of First Amendment Rights: Free Exercise and Free Speech

SB 26-018 burdens religious liberty under the Free Exercise Clause. Many parents reject gender affirmation based on deeply held religious convictions that view biological sex as immutable and transitions as incompatible with their faith. By mandating courts to weigh parental recognition of a child's identity in custody rulings, the bill discriminates against these views, privileging secular or gender-affirming perspectives. This contravenes the neutrality requirement in *Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye v. City of Hialeah* (1993), and lacks a compelling, non-targeted justification for such preference. The Court stated in *Church of the Lukumi* that the free exercise clause “protects against governmental hostility which is masked as well as overt” and cited *Walz v. Tax Comm'n of New York City* (1970) in echoing that “The Court must survey meticulously the circumstances of governmental categories to eliminate, as it were, religious gerrymanders.” These cases stand for the proposition that despite a state law’s facial appearance of non-discrimination, courts must look beyond the statute’s words and look to its effect.

The bill also constitutes compelled speech under the Free Speech Clause, forcing parents to affirm or facilitate a child's gender identity—via pronouns, attire, or medical steps—to avoid custody penalties, even if it contradicts their beliefs. This mirrors *West Virginia State Board of Education v.*

Barnette (1943), where the Court invalidated compelled pledges, stating no authority can dictate orthodoxy on personal matters. By implementing SB26-018, the Colorado government will give a dissenting parent two options: 1) face an increased risk of losing custody and the fundamental liberty interest of the care and upbringing of their children; or 2) be compelled to state that one accepts the transgender identity of their child, even though they do not.

In *Bates v. Pakseresht*, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals granted a preliminary injunction on a similar Oregon law/rule regarding placement of foster children. The rule, Oregon Administrative Rule § 413-200-0308(2)(k), would have mandated that, to gain custody of foster children, a prospective foster parent, in a manner similar to the demands of SB26-018, would have to “affirm” gender identity. The Ninth Circuit enjoined the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) from applying the rule—a policy requiring that prospective parents applying to adopt children from foster care must agree to “respect, accept, and support” the children’s sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression—to a prospective foster parent in deeming her ineligible for certification as an adoptive parent. If a sister appellate court so clearly rejected such a litmus test of orthodoxy for qualifying Oregonians as foster parents, how much more clear would such a rejection be for the test to be used in denying or granting legal parents custody?

Colorado's track record on free exercise and compelled speech amplifies these concerns. The U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly curtailed the state's attempts to impose ideological conformity. In *Masterpiece Cakeshop, Ltd. v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* (2018), the Court ruled that Colorado's enforcement of its anti-discrimination laws against a baker's religious objections to creating a same-sex wedding cake exhibited hostility toward religion, violating free exercise. Similarly, in *303 Creative LLC v. Elenis* (2023), the Court held that Colorado could not compel a web designer to create content endorsing same-sex marriages, protecting against compelled speech on expressive matters. These cases underscore Colorado's pattern of overreach in mandating affirmation of identities tied to protected classes, precisely the dynamic at play in SB 26-018.

II. Policy Concerns: Harm to Children, Family Unity, and Judicial Process

SB 26-018 is flawed policy, because it presumes affirming a minor's gender identity invariably advances long term well-being while disregarding evidence of potential harms. Research shows high desistance rates in childhood gender dysphoria—up to 80-90% of cases resolve naturally by adulthood without intervention, particularly among prepubertal children. These figures derive from multiple prospective follow-up studies of clinic-referred children, including foundational work by researchers such as Kenneth Zucker, Susan Bradley, and others, as well as summaries in reviews of earlier cohorts.

Key sources include:

Singh, Bradley, and Zucker (2021): A long-term follow-up of boys referred for gender identity concerns in childhood reported high desistance rates, with most no longer meeting criteria for gender dysphoria in adulthood.

Earlier prospective studies (e.g., from the 1980s–2010s) aggregated in reviews consistently show desistance in the 80-90% range for prepubertal-onset cases, as noted in sources like Transgender Trend compilations and critiques referencing Zucker et al.'s body of work.

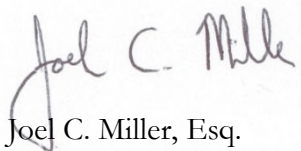
These patterns align with broader literature indicating that gender dysphoria in childhood often resolves with puberty, supporting watchful waiting approaches. Hastened affirmation risks committing children to permanent changes, including puberty blockers and hormones, associated with infertility, bone loss, and psychological issues. The U.K.'s Cass Review (2022) and European curbs on youth gender care advocate cautious approaches like watchful waiting over immediate endorsement.

Furthermore, by embedding identity recognition as a custody factor, the bill could fuel manipulative strategies in disputes, where one parent exploits a child's temporary confusion for leverage. The crux of the bill is that it equates non-affirmation with neglect, potentially prioritizing ideology over factors like abuse or stability, and eroding judicial flexibility. The name-change suppression, while protecting privacy, reduces transparency, complicating accountability in cases involving safety concerns. A prior similar proposal in HB 25-1312 (2025) saw controversial custody provisions stripped amid bipartisan opposition, highlighting the risks of such measures. Enacting SB 26-018 would invite abuse, labeling dissent as harmful without substantiation and intensifying family conflicts.

CONCLUSION

SB 26-018 is an unconstitutional encroachment on parental rights, a breach of First Amendment freedoms—risking that Colorado's excesses might be yet again rebuked by the Supreme Court. The Bill represents a misguided policy that jeopardizes children's welfare for ideological ends. It replicates existing protections while fostering division in families and courts. Legislators should reject this bill, upholding the principle that parents, not the state, are best positioned to guide their children, within constitutional bounds.

Respectfully submitted,



Joel C. Miller, Esq.
PACIFIC JUSTICE INSTITUTE



ATLANTIC CITY
NEW JERSEY

BALTIMORE
MARYLAND

BILOXI
MISSISSIPPI

BOSTON
MASSACHUSETTS

CHICAGO
ILLINOIS

COEUR D'ALENE
IDAHO

DALLAS
TEXAS

DETROIT
MICHIGAN

HONOLULU
HAWAII

HOUSTON
TEXAS

DES MOINES
IOWA

KNOXVILLE
TENNESSEE

MIAMI
FLORIDA

MILWAUKEE
WISCONSIN

NEW YORK
NEW YORK

PHILADELPHIA
PENNSYLVANIA

SACRAMENTO
CALIFORNIA

SALEM
OREGON

SAN FRANCISCO
CALIFORNIA

SANTA ANA
CALIFORNIA

SEATTLE
WASHINGTON

ST. PAUL
MINNESOTA

TRI CITIES
WASHINGTON

TUCSON
ARIZONA

WILMINGTON
DELAWARE

WINSTON-SALEM
NORTH CAROLINA

February 16, 2026

Colorado Senate Judiciary Committee
Colorado Legislature
200 E. Colfax Ave
Denver, CO 80203

Re: Senate Bill SB26-018 – Oppose

Dear Chair Weissman and Honorable Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

The Pacific Justice Institute (PJI) is a national non-profit law firm focusing on the defense of religious freedom, parental rights and other civil liberties. As the PJI's staff attorney in Colorado, I write in opposition of SB26-018. While there may be compassionate intentions behind this legislation, SB26-018 poses profound ethical, societal, and legal risks that undermine the free exercise of religion and the fundamental liberty interest of parental rights to the care and upbringing of their children as ensconced in the United States Constitution and Supreme Court jurisprudence.

BACKGROUND

Colorado Senate Bill 26-018 (SB 26-018), introduced on January 14, 2026, is titled "Legal Protections for the Dignity of Minors." The bill amends state law in two key ways: It requires courts to suppress records related to name changes for minors under 18 (unless the minor has a felony conviction), limiting public access and online publication; and it mandates that family courts, when determining parenting time and decision-making responsibilities, consider whether parents "recognize the child's identity as it relates to a protected class" under Colorado law, which explicitly includes gender identity and gender expression. While framed as promoting minor dignity, this provision effectively prioritizes parents who affirm a child's self-identified gender in custody disputes, potentially disadvantaging those who do not due to medical, psychological, religious, or conscientious reasons.

This letter in opposition contends that SB 26-018 is unconstitutional and is detrimental as public policy. It violates parental rights under the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause, infringes on First Amendment protections for free exercise of religion and free speech—echoing recent U.S. Supreme Court rebukes of Colorado's overreaches—and endangers children by favoring ideological alignment over holistic well-being. The bill also risks exploitation of its language in acrimonious custody battles and deepening family rifts. For these reasons, SB 26-018 should be defeated.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

We will predominantly focus here on the constitutional and related legal implications of SB26-018, and address separately several policy considerations that should be considered in rejecting this bill.

- I. Constitutional Violations**
 - A. Infringement on Parental Rights Under the Due Process Clause**

The Supreme Court has a long track record of protecting fundamental liberty interests of citizens from government interference—even those that are not specifically enumerated in the Constitution. One such fundamental liberty interest is directing the upbringing of one’s children. Supreme court jurisprudence has repeatedly affirmed such a right as protected under the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

In *Troxel v. Granville* (2000), the Court reiterated that “the liberty interest at issue in this case -- the interest of parents in the care, custody, and control of their children -- is perhaps the oldest of the fundamental liberty interests recognized by this court.” The Court emphasized that fit parents are presumed to act in their child's best interests, and state intervention must be narrowly tailored to a compelling interest. SB 26-018 disrupts this presumption by injecting state-mandated scrutiny of parental beliefs on gender identity into custody decisions, allowing courts to favor affirming parents without proof of harm or parental unfitness.

Under existing Colorado law (C.R.S. § 14-10-124), courts already evaluate a child's best interests comprehensively, including safety, emotional needs, and parental support. Adding a specific factor for identity recognition singles out one viewpoint, enabling the state to penalize non-affirming parents and potentially separate children from fit and capable caregivers. This oversteps bounds, as the Court in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925) declared that "the child is not the mere creature of the State."

Lastly, outside the family law custody battle setting, the language in the bill could constitute a body of evidence that not affirming a child’s transgender identity could be taken to mean that a parent is not “fit.” The natural extension of the state considering such non-affirmation as evidence of “unfitness” is that the state could attempt to cite non-affirmation as evidence in proceedings for state custody of the child in favor of a more “fit” guardian who does affirm such identity.

B. Violation of First Amendment Rights: Free Exercise and Free Speech

SB 26-018 burdens religious liberty under the Free Exercise Clause. Many parents reject gender affirmation based on deeply held religious convictions that view biological sex as immutable and transitions as incompatible with their faith. By mandating courts to weigh parental recognition of a child's identity in custody rulings, the bill discriminates against these views, privileging secular or gender-affirming perspectives. This contravenes the neutrality requirement in *Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye v. City of Hialeah* (1993), and lacks a compelling, non-targeted justification for such preference. The Court stated in *Church of the Lukumi* that the free exercise clause “protects against governmental hostility which is masked as well as overt” and cited *Walz v. Tax Comm'n of New York City* (1970) in echoing that “The Court must survey meticulously the circumstances of governmental categories to eliminate, as it were, religious gerrymanders.” These cases stand for the proposition that despite a state law’s facial appearance of non-discrimination, courts must look beyond the statute’s words and look to its effect.

The bill also constitutes compelled speech under the Free Speech Clause, forcing parents to affirm or facilitate a child's gender identity—via pronouns, attire, or medical steps—to avoid custody penalties, even if it contradicts their beliefs. This mirrors *West Virginia State Board of Education v.*

Barnette (1943), where the Court invalidated compelled pledges, stating no authority can dictate orthodoxy on personal matters. By implementing SB26-018, the Colorado government will give a dissenting parent two options: 1) face an increased risk of losing custody and the fundamental liberty interest of the care and upbringing of their children; or 2) be compelled to state that one accepts the transgender identity of their child, even though they do not.

In *Bates v. Pakseresht*, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals granted a preliminary injunction on a similar Oregon law/rule regarding placement of foster children. The rule, Oregon Administrative Rule § 413-200-0308(2)(k), would have mandated that, to gain custody of foster children, a prospective foster parent, in a manner similar to the demands of SB26-018, would have to “affirm” gender identity. The Ninth Circuit enjoined the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) from applying the rule—a policy requiring that prospective parents applying to adopt children from foster care must agree to “respect, accept, and support” the children’s sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression—to a prospective foster parent in deeming her ineligible for certification as an adoptive parent. If a sister appellate court so clearly rejected such a litmus test of orthodoxy for qualifying Oregonians as foster parents, how much more clear would such a rejection be for the test to be used in denying or granting legal parents custody?

Colorado's track record on free exercise and compelled speech amplifies these concerns. The U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly curtailed the state's attempts to impose ideological conformity. In *Masterpiece Cakeshop, Ltd. v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* (2018), the Court ruled that Colorado's enforcement of its anti-discrimination laws against a baker's religious objections to creating a same-sex wedding cake exhibited hostility toward religion, violating free exercise. Similarly, in *303 Creative LLC v. Elenis* (2023), the Court held that Colorado could not compel a web designer to create content endorsing same-sex marriages, protecting against compelled speech on expressive matters. These cases underscore Colorado's pattern of overreach in mandating affirmation of identities tied to protected classes, precisely the dynamic at play in SB 26-018.

II. Policy Concerns: Harm to Children, Family Unity, and Judicial Process

SB 26-018 is flawed policy, because it presumes affirming a minor's gender identity invariably advances long term well-being while disregarding evidence of potential harms. Research shows high desistance rates in childhood gender dysphoria—up to 80-90% of cases resolve naturally by adulthood without intervention, particularly among prepubertal children. These figures derive from multiple prospective follow-up studies of clinic-referred children, including foundational work by researchers such as Kenneth Zucker, Susan Bradley, and others, as well as summaries in reviews of earlier cohorts.

Key sources include:

Singh, Bradley, and Zucker (2021): A long-term follow-up of boys referred for gender identity concerns in childhood reported high desistance rates, with most no longer meeting criteria for gender dysphoria in adulthood.

Earlier prospective studies (e.g., from the 1980s–2010s) aggregated in reviews consistently show desistance in the 80-90% range for prepubertal-onset cases, as noted in sources like Transgender Trend compilations and critiques referencing Zucker et al.'s body of work.

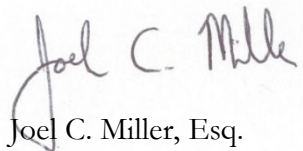
These patterns align with broader literature indicating that gender dysphoria in childhood often resolves with puberty, supporting watchful waiting approaches. Hastened affirmation risks committing children to permanent changes, including puberty blockers and hormones, associated with infertility, bone loss, and psychological issues. The U.K.'s Cass Review (2022) and European curbs on youth gender care advocate cautious approaches like watchful waiting over immediate endorsement.

Furthermore, by embedding identity recognition as a custody factor, the bill could fuel manipulative strategies in disputes, where one parent exploits a child's temporary confusion for leverage. The crux of the bill is that it equates non-affirmation with neglect, potentially prioritizing ideology over factors like abuse or stability, and eroding judicial flexibility. The name-change suppression, while protecting privacy, reduces transparency, complicating accountability in cases involving safety concerns. A prior similar proposal in HB 25-1312 (2025) saw controversial custody provisions stripped amid bipartisan opposition, highlighting the risks of such measures. Enacting SB 26-018 would invite abuse, labeling dissent as harmful without substantiation and intensifying family conflicts.

CONCLUSION

SB 26-018 is an unconstitutional encroachment on parental rights, a breach of First Amendment freedoms—risking that Colorado's excesses might be yet again rebuked by the Supreme Court. The Bill represents a misguided policy that jeopardizes children's welfare for ideological ends. It replicates existing protections while fostering division in families and courts. Legislators should reject this bill, upholding the principle that parents, not the state, are best positioned to guide their children, within constitutional bounds.

Respectfully submitted,



Joel C. Miller, Esq.
PACIFIC JUSTICE INSTITUTE

February 16, 2026.

Re: Testimony against SB 26-018 Legal Protections for Dignity of Minors.

Good afternoon. My name is **Ruth Sobol**. I am a fifth-generation resident of Denver, and I am the grandmother of four toddlers. My roots here run deep. My grandchildren's futures are rooted here, too. That is why I am here today to speak against Senate Bill 26-018, Legal Protections for Dignity of Minors.

I come before you not as a policy expert, but as a mother and grandmother who has watched the culture shift dramatically in a very short period of time.

At what age is it appropriate for state senators to discuss issues of sex and gender identity with my grandchildren? Pre-K? Second grade? Fifth grade?

Not long ago, most parents would have said those conversations belong at home, guided by family values and a child's maturity. If such deeply personal subjects ever needed to be discussed, it was understood that parents—not institutions—would take the lead.

Today, that understanding feels uncertain.

Across the country, school districts have introduced lessons on gender identity to very young children. Parents have discovered curricula teaching first graders that gender may not align with their bodies, or encouraging elementary students to select and change pronouns at will. In some districts, young children are introduced to concepts that many families believe are developmentally premature.

When parents raise concerns, they are often told these lessons are harmless—or that they are not happening at all. Yet documented examples from districts in states like New Jersey, Illinois, California, and Florida show otherwise. Whether one agrees with those lessons or not, the fact remains: parents and grandparents are increasingly being sidelined in conversations about their own children.

This is not about rejecting anyone's dignity. It is not about denying that some families navigate complex questions of identity. Every child deserves respect and safety. Every child deserves protection from bullying or harm.

But dignity also includes the dignity of childhood itself.

My grandchildren are toddlers. They are learning their colors, their letters, how to share, how to sit still for a story. Their world is small and precious. They trust the adults around them completely. They do not yet have the emotional or cognitive maturity to process abstract ideas about sexuality or identity politics.

School should be a place where children learn to read fluently, to write clearly, to master arithmetic, to explore science and history—to build the intellectual foundation that will support them for life.

When schools and state legislators move into deeply personal areas of identity—especially without clear parental consent or notification—they blur a line that has long protected families. Senate Bill 26-018 may be framed as protecting dignity, but many of us fear it will diminish parental authority and accelerate the introduction of complex sexual and gender topics into ever younger grades.

As a fifth-generation Denverite, I care about the character of our community. We have always valued family, common sense, and respect for differing viewpoints. We can protect children from cruelty without redefining childhood itself. We can ensure safety without removing parents from the most intimate conversations in a child's life.

I am asking you to slow down. To consider developmental readiness. To ensure that parents remain primary decision-makers in matters of sex and gender education until the child is considered an adult.

Most of all, I am asking you to protect the innocence of young children—including my four little grandchildren, and the many others across Denver who cannot stand at this microphone and speak for themselves.

Thank you for your time.



Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council

To members of the Senate Judiciary,

My name is Kristina Ericson and I am the Policy Director for the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council. I am writing in support of SB-018

The Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council is a federally-mandated, Governor-appointed council and state office that works to knock down systemic accessibility barriers so that Coloradans with disabilities can lead meaningful lives. We work to advise our state agencies, general assembly members, and congressional delegates on developing policies and rules that impact people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Council supports this bill as it pertains to the rights of minors with disabilities. We strongly believe that young Coloradans deserve to have their true identities and selves protected and listened to. Young Coloradans with intellectual and developmental disabilities deserve to have their lived experiences taken into consideration during legal name changing processes, and we support the efforts of this bill to do so.

We are happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

Best,

Kristina Ericson, MSW, CPACC, ADAC (she/her)
Director of Policy and Partnerships
[Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council](#)
Phone: (720) 703-5101

Please accept this comment AGAINST Senate Bill SB26-018 - Legal Protections for Dignity of Minors. This bill inappropriately attacks the role of parents in guiding their children's upbringing. There are two critical issues.

The first is requiring courts to factor in whether a parent affirms a child's self-identified gender or other protected class identities during custody and parenting time determinations. A parent could lose custody of a child where there is no evidence of abuse or neglect. This is governmental overreach.

The second issue is treatment of legal name changes for minors. Again, the bill is attacking parental rights.

Please shut this bill down.

Thank you for reviewing my concerns,

Loretta Huff

**TESTIMONY ON [SB26-018](#),
LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR DIGNITY OF MINORS**

Mister Chair, Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to advocate for our children and youth. My name is Dawn Fritz, and I am Colorado PTA's Director of Legislative Engagement. I am proud to represent our nation's oldest and largest child advocacy association. Our mission is to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Colorado PTA supports Senate Bill 26-018.

PTA supports the passage of legislation, including the bill before us, that create safe, inclusive, supportive, affirming, and accepting environments. We believe our laws and policies should recognize and protect LGBTQ+ children and youth from discrimination and harm based on their identities. This bill advances that priority in meaningful and practical ways.

SB26-018 protects the privacy and dignity of minors seeking a legal name change by limiting public access to those court records. For many young people, a name change is deeply personal. It may reflect identity, family circumstances, safety considerations, or alignment with who they are. Publicly accessible records can expose children to stigma, harassment, or unnecessary scrutiny— particularly for youth who are already vulnerable. Protecting those records affirms that children are entitled to privacy and dignity in legal processes that affect their identity.

Children thrive when they are seen, valued, and affirmed. Policies that protect their dignity help create the conditions for stability, joy, and healthy development. All children and youth deserve to grow up in environments where they are safe, supported, and accepted. SB26-018 strengthens protections for children navigating sensitive legal processes and ensures that their identities are not dismissed when courts are making decisions that profoundly affect their lives.

Colorado PTA strongly supports SB26-018.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.