

Hello. My name is Chloe Cole and I am a detransitioned 18 year old woman from California who went through the process of medical transition between the ages of 12-16. The three main interventions I was given were puberty blockers and testosterone, starting at 13, and a double mastectomy at 15. I was treated negligently by my healthcare provider but the biggest failure they made was encouraging and allowing me to medically transition as a child in the first place.

My therapists and gender specialists failed to address several underlying circumstances and comorbidities that led to the onset of my gender dysphoria. I began puberty when I was no older than 8 or 9 and so from a very young age I had a lot of discomfort around my developing body. I was afraid to grow from a girl into a woman and experience things like periods, childbirth, and menopause, because I would often only hear about how scary and painful being a woman was from other girls and older women. I never really had any strong female role models and I often never felt like I fit in with other girls, but I had a tomboyish streak due to the influence of my older brothers. I had previously been diagnosed with ADHD, but I actually am on the spectrum though I was not diagnosed until I was 17 — the gender specialist who referred me to surgery also was the same person who later recommended me to get a screening for autism. Because I am autistic, I have some more masculine behaviors and I am more object oriented than most girls. I have some social, cognitive and sensory processing differences that made school and going through puberty a little more difficult. All things considered, these struggles were all normal but were misrepresented as problems having to do with my gender.

I have suffered a multitude of complications from the blockers, cross sex hormones, and surgery. My quality of life is still being impacted to this day. I had my puberty blocked when I was already about 4 years in, so I started experiencing some menopause-like symptoms, including severe hot flashes and itching all over my body. This went away after I stopped taking them, but I still have joint pains and shooting pains in my spine. During a consultation for testosterone, I was told by my endocrinologist that I would experience vaginal atrophy. I was not informed that this atrophy actually affects the rest of the organs in the pelvic region. It caused me to experience episodes of severe uterine cramps that were rare, but unpredictable and worse than any menstrual cramps I've ever had. I was prescribed topical estrogen, but my urinary tract was still affected, and I am still susceptible to dehydration and infection. The status of my fertility is unknown, but I do not have the choice of breastfeeding my future children because my breasts are gone. I was told this by my surgeon but I did not understand the importance of breastfeeding or even being a parent, because I was still a child. I am now grieving as an adult, and on top of that, the areolar skin grafts they used in my surgery began to fail two years afterward. I have to wear bandages on my chest every day. The doctors who helped me to transition have not given me the appropriate care for any of these complications, either.

You may be wondering what role my parents played in this and whether I was forced by them to endure this. In fact, they were quite shocked when I first told them about my feelings of discomfort around my birth sex and my desire to be seen as their son. They wanted me to be comfortable but they were not okay with me going beyond cutting my hair shorter and dressing like a boy. They wanted me to explore without intervention and wait until I was legally an adult to let me decide whether I wanted to go the medical route, but when they expressed this to my doctors, their concerns were dismissed and they were lied to. They were told that all children are confident in their gender identity from a very young age, that the regret rate of transitioning is less than 1-2%, and that were I not affirmed in my identity and decision to transition, it was

likely that I would commit suicide. They were not given any other option. My parents were forced to make this decision under duress. But even if they were on board with me transitioning medically from the start, no parent, or any adult, really, has a right to determine whether a child gets to be chemically sterilized or mutilated. Under most circumstances, this would be called abuse. But somehow we have managed to market procedures that take away function from the body as as “necessary, life saving healthcare” for children and adults alike.

Legislative intervention will protect other children and families in this state from medical experimentation and defend the greatest right that children have — the right to grow up into healthy adults who are able to live fulfilling lives. Thank you for choosing to stand up for the health and safety of children.