

TRANSCRIPTION OF AUDIO RECORDING

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HOUSE GENERAL SESSION - FLORIDA CHANNEL

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Stenographically Transcribed Audio Recording By:
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1 Whereupon, the following proceedings were
2 transcribed from an audio recording:

3 SPEAKER RENNER: Read the next bill.

4 THE CLERK: By Health Policy and Senator
5 Yarborough and others, CS for Senate Bill 254, a
6 bill to be entitled "An Act Relating to Treatments
7 for Sex Reassignment."

8 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Fine, you're
9 recognized to explain the bill.

10 REPRESENTATIVE FINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

11 This is the bill ending the castration and
12 mutilation of children that we discussed yesterday.

13 SPEAKER RENNER: Are there any amendments?

14 THE CLERK: None at the desk, Mr. Speaker.

15 SPEAKER RENNER: Members, we are going into
16 structured debate on CS for SB 254. Debate will be
17 limited to 30 minutes per side in 15-minute increments,
18 total debate time not to exceed 60 minutes.

19 Representative Gottlieb, you're recognized
20 to begin debate, and the clerk will start the debate
21 clock.

22 Representative Daley, you're recognized.

23 REPRESENTATIVE DALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

24 I would like to yield to Representative
25 Rayner-Goolsby.

1 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative
2 Rayner-Goolsby, you're recognized to debate.

3 REPRESENTATIVE RAYNER-GOOLSBY: Thank you,
4 Mr. Speaker.

5 When I dare to be powerful to use my strength
6 in the service of my vision and, in this case, the
7 service of my people, then it becomes less important
8 whether I am afraid.

9 I am not one that likes to admit that I get
10 afraid. I have been afraid of debating this
11 particular bill. People have asked me, Well, Rep,
12 why do you care so much? You're not trans. It
13 doesn't bother you. I'm very acutely aware of
14 when we target the most marginalized among us that
15 we're all at peril.

16 There's been a lot of talk about evil in
17 this building with regard to this issue. And when
18 I was thinking about fear, I went to one of my
19 paper mentors, Dr. King. Dr. King in his letter
20 from a Birmingham jail, he says -- because I was
21 asking, like, God, why am I here? Like, I didn't
22 come up here for this. It's clear that I'm not
23 really wanted. Like, why am I here, God? And
24 Dr. King says in his letter: I am in Birmingham
25 because injustice is here. He said: I was in

1 Birmingham because injustice was here.

2 And when he went to Birmingham -- I want to
3 set the scene for you super quickly -- the math and
4 the justice was not on his side. There was severe
5 injustice that was happening, and he had a comfortable
6 life in Atlanta. He was pastoring a church, a church
7 that still stands, and yet he said that he could not
8 stay in Atlanta with the status quo. He had to go to
9 Birmingham because injustice was there.

10 And today it is much like this for me. I'm
11 in a House where there's 84 to 35. The Republicans
12 have the House, the Senate, the Governor's mansion,
13 the court. And yet I am here because an injustice is
14 here. And what injustice am I speaking of? I'm
15 speaking about a bill that seeks to rip children away
16 from affirming parents, a bill that would seek to
17 stop adults from becoming their full selves. This is
18 in a long line of list of bills that ban books and
19 silence Black voices, bills that strip women and
20 birthing people of a bodily economy, bills that allow
21 for political gamesmanship, and trafficking humans to
22 Martha's Vineyard, the bills that make it easier to
23 own a gun and harder to vote. I am here because
24 there's an injustice here.

25 And much like Dr. King, I cannot sit idly by

1 in St. Petersburg watching the injustice happen,
2 because Dr. King said an injustice anywhere is a
3 threat to justice everywhere. And he said: We are
4 caught in an inescapable network of mutuality tied in
5 a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one
6 directly affects all indirectly.

7 I know people who do not identify as
8 transgender say, This is not my fight. But I want to
9 be very clear with you. The prophet Dr. King was
10 very clear when he talked about when we have injustice
11 against one group of people, that train is never late
12 for everybody else.

13 So I came here to Tallahassee because I
14 could not sit idly by. I didn't know that this is
15 what I would be dealing with. I did not know that we
16 would be fighting for the lives of the very people
17 that we get to serve.

18 But, you know, it was alluded to the math not
19 being on our side. However, Representative Pastor
20 Bracy Davis, when I was in prayer, I was reminded of
21 this thing. When we are in the pursuit of justice
22 and what is right, the math is never on our side.

23 My faith tradition teaches me that a little
24 shepherd boy was able to kill a giant with five stones
25 in a slingshot. The math was not on his side. My

1 faith tradition teaches me that that same shepherd
2 boy was called out from all of his brothers to be
3 king. The math was not on his side.

4 My faith tradition teaches me that an
5 unlikely Savior would come through 42 generations to
6 survive genocide and start a revolution of love with
7 12 disciples. The math was not on his side.

8 So I am clear on this, while it is midnight
9 in Florida and the math is not on our side, but with
10 God, the math is always on our side. You see, God
11 loves justice; God hates injustice, especially to the
12 least of these.

13 Transgender people make up .6 percent of
14 the population of this nation, .6 percent, and yet
15 350 bills have been filed in the United States to
16 target them, including in this legislature. Yet
17 I believe that God loves justice.

18 So I'm going to end my time with this.
19 I'm going to say their names: Bee Love Slater, Semaj
20 Billingslea, Unique Banks, Jenny De Leon, Angel Naira,
21 Kristina Gomez Reinwald, India Clarke, Mercedes
22 Successful, Chayviss "Chay" Darice Reed, Rhiannon
23 Layendecker, Celine Walker, Antash'a English,
24 Cathalina Christina James, Sasha Garden, Jessie Sumlar,
25 Londonn Moore, Ellie Marie Washtock, Kiki Fantroy,

1 Tony McDade, Bree Black, Kali Collet Addison, Skylar
2 Heath, Yunieski Carey Herrera, Alexis Braxton, Keri
3 Washington, Royal Poetical Starz, Nedra Moss, Duval
4 Princess, Chay Reed, Kimmy Icon Braxton.

5 Those are the names of transgender Floridians
6 that have been killed at the hands of violence. So I
7 will say their names because God loves justice,
8 and they are loved and God loves them.

9 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Daley, you're
10 recognized.

11 REPRESENTATIVE DALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
12 I yield to Representative Woodson.

13 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Woodson,
14 you're recognized in debate.

15 REPRESENTATIVE WOODSON: Thank you,
16 Mr. Speaker.

17 Members, we are talking about gender-affirming
18 care. We are talking about treatment for trans people
19 and children. Do you know that trans people are
20 already dealing with the feeling of not being wanted,
21 not being accepted, not being loved, not belonging?
22 Do we want to treat them like they are refugees in
23 their own country? I don't think so.

24 I believe that we need to understand that
25 the care that someone needs should be up to them, and

1 their parents, when we're talking about children.
2 I think this is a territory that we have no right
3 of stepping into. We need to put ourself in their
4 positions. Because I'm a mother, I don't want you to
5 come in and tell me what to do with my child. I don't
6 want you to make any decision as to the care that my
7 child needs.

8 When it comes to that, it should be me, my
9 husband, my child, and the doctor. That's all it
10 should be. Who are we to be making decisions for
11 kids? We all have our own kids. Why don't we make
12 decisions for our own children and let the parents
13 decide what type of care that the children need.

14 I had some trans kids reaching out to me.
15 They have been in treatment for so long, and that
16 was a decision that their parents made in
17 collaboration with the doctor and themselves. I had
18 some trans people come into my office this past week,
19 and this lady shared with me that she has been on
20 this medication for the past 20 years. She called
21 her doctor to get her prescription refilled, and her
22 doctor told her that he could not refill that
23 prescription for her.

24 Now, do you know what's going to happen?
25 We think we have a problem with mental health. Our

1 problem is going to be worse, because we are going
2 to have people dealing with depression, anxiety
3 because they have been on this type of medication for
4 a long time. All they are asking for is let them be
5 themselves; let them get the treatment that they need
6 in order for them to live a life just like we all are
7 living our lives.

8 My life is my life. Their life is their
9 life. Your life is your life. And we have no
10 business interfering in the care and treatment that
11 they are getting.

12 Members, you still have time to think about
13 this. I know today we have had some really contentious
14 bills, and it's not too late for you to rethink about
15 this. We are talking about treatment. Just like
16 when something is wrong, you go to your doctor, they
17 determine a course of treatment for you. It's the
18 same thing. They have been in treatment, and this is
19 something that we should not interfere with.

20 Are we showing grace? Are we showing
21 kindness? Are we showing love for all men, including
22 those trans kids and adults? It is very often that
23 we have opposing views about certain things, but we
24 still respect you as colleagues. So we have to
25 respect the trans kids, and we also have to respect

1 the parents as well who can make decisions for their
2 own children.

3 So I'm asking you to please reconsider your
4 vote and vote no on this bill.

5 Thank you so much.

6 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Daley, you're
7 recognized.

8 REPRESENTATIVE DALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
9 I yield to Representative Gantt.

10 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Gantt, you're
11 recognized in debate.

12 REPRESENTATIVE GANTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

13 I want to start off by saying that my first
14 hero in life was my oldest brother -- or is my
15 oldest brother, Lord -- Major Anthony Gantt. And
16 he served two tours in Iraq and Afghanistan,
17 respectively. And when he came back home, he made a
18 very lasting statement to me. He said -- I said
19 something slick to him, and he was, like, You know
20 what? I fight so that you can have your freedoms,
21 and freedom is not free.

22 And when I think about the turmoil that my
23 family experienced every time he went overseas, every
24 single day praying for him to come back home, I truly
25 understand what that statement means, and it means

1 that Americans have the ability to choose the life
2 that they choose to live and that this legislative
3 body does not get to make that decision and that
4 choice, especially when we're talking about a parental
5 relationship, which is one of the most intimate
6 relationships that you can imagine in the human
7 experience.

8 And I am just baffled that all these
9 thousands of years of human history that we are still
10 choosing to discriminate on other human beings. Last
11 week we had very emotional debates about when life
12 begins, and I think that we can all agree on that
13 although a man and a woman or even an IVF clinic may
14 join a sperm and an egg together, that we do not
15 ourselves create life. And so how do we now, when
16 the life is here, say that we can assign value to it
17 when we, ourselves, didn't create that life? We have
18 got to do better, and we have got to remember that
19 every Floridian deserves dignity and respect.

20 The last point I want to make is thinking
21 about our teaching hospitals and our health care
22 facilities and our doctors who are providing
23 treatments, who are the experts in endocrinology, who
24 know more than this legislative body. The last time
25 I checked, I don't think we actually have

1 endocrinologists in this body that serve, so we don't
2 have a true expert on this matter.

3 Now, when we talk about teaching hospitals
4 and attracting doctors to Florida, I want to just put
5 this point out here that *Washington Monthly* ranks
6 teaching hospitals. The Lown Institute Hospitals
7 Index rankings are based on three categories of data:
8 patient outcomes, civic leadership, and value of
9 care. And they are weighted 50, 30, and 20 percent,
10 respectively.

11 When we talk about civic leadership, it's
12 divided into three categories, and one being
13 inclusivity.

14 So we have the potential for unintended
15 consequences to impact the rankings of our teaching
16 hospitals and our ability to be able to attract
17 physicians to Florida to provide professional help,
18 help that we in this body are not even qualified to
19 opine on.

20 Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

21 SPEAKER RENNER: Thank you.

22 Representative Grant, you're recognized.

23 REPRESENTATIVE GRANT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

24 Would you please recognize Representative
25 Tramont in debate?

1 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Tramont,
2 you're recognized in debate.

3 REPRESENTATIVE TRAMONT: Thank you,
4 Mr. Speaker.

5 I rise today in support of this bill. I rise
6 as a person of free thought. I rise as a husband. I
7 rise as a father, and I rise as a person of faith.

8 And the reason I point out that last
9 identifying characteristic is because there seems to
10 be some confusion at times as to what the role of
11 faith should play in our public discourse. Let me
12 clarify very quickly. In no place in our United States
13 Constitution or our State Constitution, for that
14 matter, am I required, or anybody else, for that
15 matter, required to check our faith at the door before
16 we walk into this chamber.

17 Now, on one hand we're told by our friends on
18 the other side of the aisle that faith plays no part
19 in this public discourse. Yet, on the other hand, I
20 have heard far more preaching and scripture references
21 from my Democrats than I've ever heard from many folks
22 in my party. And, albeit, the scriptures are often
23 used way out of context, but that's another debate
24 for later on. Nevertheless, I welcome the effort.

25 So I'm going to offer a proper context here

1 today, validated by science, pertaining to my support
2 of the bill, and here it is. In the image of God, he
3 created them. Male and female, he created them.
4 Folks, this is rock solid, irreversible truth,
5 validated by science and our medical community,
6 period.

7 And you see, there are two realities here.
8 One is the truth that you are either male or female.
9 This is not subject to one's opinion and is a
10 demonstrable fact.

11 And second here, the other reality is this:
12 This is not about you, adults. This is about
13 protecting children. If you as an adult want to make
14 this life-altering, major decision, have at it. I
15 support that right to do that. Matter of fact, even
16 my disagreement of this issue would never lead me
17 to think less of anybody that made that choice for
18 themselves, nor would it ever lead me to support
19 legislation that would revoke that right for you to
20 do that.

21 Now, as one of our colleagues said, though,
22 yesterday, they said, This is not about you. This is
23 about children. Now, one of my colleagues said
24 yesterday on the left -- I quote -- Your faith should
25 inform your decision to protect children. I accept

1 that invitation, and this bill does exactly that.
2 This is not hateful. This is not ignoring a segment
3 of society. This is, in fact, protecting the most
4 vulnerable of our society as it had stated last week
5 as well. Even the most hardened criminals in our
6 prison system have an enforcement mechanism to protect
7 children. Why? Because it's engrained in us as
8 human beings to protect children.

9 Now, listen, hear this: I hear you when you
10 say we should love one another. I could not agree
11 more. And my scripture says: Love one another. Do
12 not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but be
13 a blessing.

14 But I say here today that you cannot love
15 your neighbor if you are not willing to acknowledge
16 and tell them the truth. It's impossible to do that.

17 Now, I've spent my entire adult life -- and
18 the fact is, the truth is that children are not
19 equipped to make this permanent, damaging decision.
20 They're just not there in life. I've spent my entire
21 adult life investing my life into children and
22 families. And I can tell you that when it comes to
23 children, the only thing that's for sure is nothing is
24 for sure. They change with every waking moment. They
25 go from being punk, to Goth, to athletics, to studious,

1 to whatever they feel like at that moment. And that's
2 okay. We call that temporary experimentation, personal
3 development, personality growth. We encourage that.
4 But we do not, cannot, will not condone psychological,
5 permanent physical damage to their lives. Why?
6 Because in our society, we believe in loving and
7 protecting children.

8 Now I'll close with this. The argument says
9 that, you know, some people just feel trapped, and we
10 need to free them. I could not agree more. I could
11 not share that duty of us as human beings more. But
12 hear this now: Love is not what sets them free.
13 Acceptance is not what breaks them free from their
14 trap. Tolerance is not what sets a person free. As
15 wonderful and necessary as those attributes are, they
16 are not the keys to freedom. It is, was, and always
17 will be the truth that will set a person free.

18 So, my friends, we're here to protect
19 children. So let's protect them. Let's love them by
20 acknowledging and telling them the truth up on
21 this bill.

22 SPEAKER RENNER: Thank you.

23 Representative Grant, you're recognized.

24 REPRESENTATIVE GRANT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

25 Please recognize Representative Holcomb in

1 debate.

2 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Holcomb,
3 you're recognized in debate.

4 REPRESENTATIVE HOLCOMB: Thank you,
5 Mr. Speaker.

6 When I ran for this seat for House
7 District 53, I had no idea that I would be here today
8 having to vote on a bill to protect my daughter, my
9 wife, and all the women of this country from their
10 right to go to the bathroom in peace. I had no idea
11 that I would be here fighting for our live
12 entertainment events to exclude children. And I had
13 no idea that I would be here today to fight for our
14 children and their ability to be children for their
15 entire childhood life.

16 Folks, our kids can't buy tobacco. They
17 can't buy alcohol. They can't buy a gun. They can't
18 get a tattoo. They can't enter into a contract,
19 and they can't vote, because they don't have the
20 legal responsibility to do those things.

21 But the Democrat Party in this country has
22 made it very clear that they want our children to
23 have these surgeries available to them and their
24 hormone treatments available to them, and, in some
25 cases, they don't want the parents to ever know about

1 it. I call that a war on our children. And, folks,
2 I have deployed in support of war, so I recognize what
3 that is.

4 And I want to thank Representative Fine,
5 Representative Massullo being able to take on that war.

6 Thank you.

7 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Grant, you're
8 recognized.

9 REPRESENTATIVE GRANT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
10 Please recognize Representative Rudman.

11 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Rudman, you're
12 recognized in debate.

13 REPRESENTATIVE RUDMAN: Thank you,
14 Mr. Speaker.

15 I would like to start off by commending
16 the bill sponsors, first of all, for recognizing that
17 there are sometimes some valid reasons to have surgery,
18 and this bill actually provides exceptions for those
19 patients: those with ambiguous genitalia, chromosomal
20 issues, or insomniac hormonal deficiencies. All of
21 these cases are extremely rare. I thought it was
22 extremely thoughtful that you included that in your
23 bill. So thank you for that.

24 As far as gender dysphoria goes, I have at
25 least three teenage patients in my practice with

1 gender dysphoria. All three are loyal patients. None
2 of the three have ever asked me for surgery. None of
3 the three get hormones from my office. And they know
4 all of this up front when they make their appointments,
5 but they keep coming back for appointments. Matter
6 of fact, even though they know I'm not going to
7 prescribe or recommend these treatments, they
8 recommend me to their friends.

9 Now, how can this be if I'm depriving them
10 of vital and lifesaving care? Well, I think you know
11 the answer is simple. I listen to them. I provide
12 counseling for them. Sometimes that's all a patient
13 with gender dysphoria needs. This whole notion that
14 elective mutilation is somehow the only logical
15 treatment is simply preposterous.

16 And you'll also notice I never use the term
17 "puberty blocker." That is just a euphemism. What
18 it is, it is the inappropriate prescription of hormone
19 in a condition for which it was never intended.

20 Among other things, these hormones can stunt
21 growth, decrease bone density, and cause infertility.
22 So you can imagine how I felt yesterday when I was
23 sitting here listening to people with no knowledge
24 of the facts complain about asking a child to wait
25 until they are an adult before starting dangerous

1 therapies.

2 I want you all to understand, I can't even
3 remove a wart from a child without getting informed
4 consent from their patient first. Do you also not
5 understand that a lot of times in medicine the best
6 answer to a situation is to just wait. It's called
7 observation. It is a valid choice in situations
8 where the patient is simply too young to risk
9 procedures.

10 But I'm just going to cut right to the chase
11 here. You see, there's not a whole lot of money to be
12 made through observation. When I see a child for
13 gender dysphoria, we may talk for 45 minutes or an
14 hour, and I'll get paid less than \$100. But that's
15 okay, because I'm guided by conscience, not by
16 money.

17 However, as we learned from the situation up
18 at Vanderbilt, we now know there are plenty of doctors
19 who are not guided by conscience but by the fact that
20 these surgeries pay a lot of money. Now, I may
21 not be able to do anything about those bloodsuckers at
22 Vanderbilt, but I can sure protect our children from
23 unscrupulous doctors right here in Florida. The art
24 of medicine is not for sale. Doctors are not short
25 order cooks taking orders from children. We do not

1 irrevocably change someone's life for the sake of a
2 fad. And, furthermore, we do not conduct scientific
3 experiments on children. I urge every Florida
4 physician, protect your children and follow your
5 oath. First do no harm.

6 And I urge all my colleagues in the chamber
7 to protect our children by voting for this good bill.

8 Thank you.

9 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Grant, you're
10 recognized.

11 REPRESENTATIVE GRANT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

12 Please recognize Representative Black in
13 debate.

14 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Black, you're
15 recognized in debate.

16 REPRESENTATIVE BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

17 Earlier we were reminded by Representative
18 Bankson that the pages are gone. They were sent out
19 of the room. And thank God for that. Because what
20 we're discussing here at this moment, Members, this
21 is the stuff real nightmares are made of.

22 Let's be perfectly clear, we're talking about
23 taking little children and they put them to sleep
24 on a gurney. They cut off their breasts. They sever
25 their genitalia. They throw them in the trash. They

1 then give them chemicals to alter their physiology.
2 They are never the same again; disfigured, crippled.

3 It was said earlier that today we confront
4 evil. Members, this is evil. What I just described
5 is gruesome, and it is diabolical, and it should
6 end with your vote here today.

7 Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

8 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Grant, you're
9 recognized.

10 REPRESENTATIVE GRANT: Waive our time.

11 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Daley,
12 you're recognized.

13 REPRESENTATIVE DALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

14 I yield to Representative Cassel.

15 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Cassel,
16 you're recognized in debate.

17 REPRESENTATIVE CASSEL: Thank you,
18 Mr. Speaker.

19 I would like to start off my debate with
20 just recognizing the obvious in the room. We don't
21 agree. We don't see this issue the same. So I want
22 to focus on parts of this bill that I think many of
23 you haven't quite yet recognized the impacts that it's
24 actually going to have on Florida companies, Florida
25 businesses, our insurance market, our mental health,

1 because I think those are spaces that we actually
2 probably could have some agreement.

3 But when you draft legislation where the
4 first time we're learning that person is actually
5 in this bill defined as corporate personhood, we are
6 impacting a much larger section of Florida, the
7 business community that I think we all actually care
8 about and want to make sure continues to thrive.

9 There are currently the following Fortune 1000
10 companies that are based here in Fort Lauderdale --
11 or in Florida that currently offer at least one
12 trans-inclusive health care benefit:

13 Office Depot located in Boca Raton, for you
14 Palm Beach representatives. Let's not forget we
15 as legislators use Office Depot for our supplies.
16 This bill impacts that.

17 Darden Restaurants in Jacksonville, Raymond
18 James in St. Petersburg, Tech Data in Clearwater, HSN
19 in St. Petersburg, all corporations that have HRC
20 ratings that offer trans-inclusive health care. Those
21 corporations will all be impacted by this. If they
22 have state contracts, those will be impacted by this.

23 Let's talk about corporations that are
24 not based in Florida but we all do business with
25 that will be impacted by this on a national scale,

1 because what we do here in Florida will stifle what
2 they can do nationally: American Express, Boeing,
3 Papa John's, Lowe's, Shell Oil, Tesla, Tractor Supply
4 Company, and Walmart, all companies with HRC, Human
5 Rights Campaigns, ratings of 100 percent, which means
6 they are diverse; they are inclusive; they recognize
7 the LGBTQ community, and they offer trans-inclusive
8 health care.

9 So when you vote on this bill, it's not just
10 protecting children, because it actually impacts
11 adults, which I have yet to hear anybody recognize.
12 It's also impacting our corporations.

13 The insurance component, which I asked about
14 yesterday, we have private health insurance companies
15 that this bill is going to dictate the coverages that
16 they can offer, coverages that are currently being
17 offered that people have paid premiums for, that the
18 sponsors acknowledged they will not receive that
19 unearned premium back or that benefit back for now
20 coverage being removed from those insurance policies.

21 We've seen this before in our property
22 insurance market, where we have given property
23 insurance companies a bailout, and we've allowed them
24 to take from Florida without having to return those
25 benefits.

1 If we have the power in this body to dictate
2 what insurance companies do, the real crisis this
3 state is facing in the property insurance market, you
4 know what we should be doing? We should be telling
5 our auto insurance companies who offer the most
6 profitable form of auto insurance that if they're
7 going to write property insurance elsewhere in the
8 country, they need to do it here in Florida. That
9 will actually solve Floridians' problems.

10 Talk about mental health. We heard that the
11 mental health bill here today is going to keep the
12 status quo. You know what the status quo in Florida
13 is? We are 42nd in the country for patient-to-provider
14 ratio; one doctor for every 515 patients. \$380 million
15 we leave on the table of federal dollars because this
16 body doesn't want to expand Medicaid.

17 When we talk about who we're impacting,
18 those are who we're impacting.

19 That's my time.

20 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Daley, you're
21 recognized.

22 REPRESENTATIVE DALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

23 I'd like to yield to Representative Eskamani.

24 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Eskamani,
25 you're recognized in debate.

1 REPRESENTATIVE ESKAMANI: Thank you so much,
2 Mr. Speaker.

3 I first want to provide brief history to how
4 we got here, because it's been a difficult history I
5 know for myself and also for those who are directly
6 impacted. Because first, Members, this body said we
7 were just focused on sports, on high school sports.

8 And then you said, We just want to focus
9 on restrictions in education, kindergarten to third
10 grade. And, indeed, today the Department of Education
11 has expanded that policy to all grades in the state of
12 Florida.

13 So please forgive me, Members, when you ask
14 me to read a bill and assume that I trust what's in
15 that bill, because I've seen time and time again
16 implementation looks very different than what was
17 said in this chamber.

18 And, of course, you've also said that you're
19 just focused on those under the age of 18, and yet
20 this bill in front of us absolutely impacts adults.
21 It absolutely impacts insurance coverage for
22 hardworking Floridians who pay their fair share in
23 taxes, who work to contribute to our economy, and now
24 their insurance coverage will no longer be able to
25 cover the care that they need.

1 It's been very difficult to watch this
2 process, to go to the Board of Medicine meetings and
3 watch testimony after testimony of Floridians directly
4 impacted by this legislation ask that the Board of
5 Medicine protect our access to care, only to be met
6 with rejection. And it's the same experience in these
7 committee meetings where we've had one-sided panels
8 in an effort to prop up a majority narrative, a
9 majority message. Well, you ignore the majority of
10 Floridians who are asking you to not only vote down
11 this measure, but to treat them as humans.

12 It's been very difficult to meet parents of
13 trans kids in my district who are in tears, thanking
14 me for their work, but me not knowing what to even
15 tell them to give them comfort.

16 Now, I understand it might be challenging to
17 put yourself in the shoes of a trans person or the
18 parent of a trans kid. There's a lot of disinformation
19 out there, some shared here today, that can create
20 that type of challenge, that kind of difficulty to
21 figure out what that experience is like.

22 But I feel like everyone here has experienced
23 the notion of being left out, of not fitting in, to
24 feel different. Maybe you know don't like how your
25 body looks. Maybe you're too tall to others or too

1 short to others. Maybe you're too loud. I know I am.
2 Maybe some folks have told you you're not smart
3 enough or you're too hairy or maybe you're losing too
4 much hair too soon. There's all of these experiences
5 we have that make us feel like we're not good enough
6 and that we don't fit in.

7 Now, for many of us, when we experience that,
8 we can do something about it. We can go to the gym.
9 We can try to wear high shoes. We can figure out ways
10 to feel good in our skin and to be who we want to be
11 and also be who we want others to see us as. We can
12 take those measures. We can take those steps.

13 But now imagine that if that feeling that
14 you don't fit in is nagging and is consistent to a
15 point of deep sense of unease where you're not only
16 having dissatisfaction with who you are, but it's
17 leading to depression, anxiety, and having a harmful
18 impact on your health and well-being. If you are in
19 that situation or if your child was in that situation,
20 you would want to pursue every option to take care of
21 them, and that is the truth, Members, that you would
22 explore every single option to take care of them.

23 One of my constituents who's the parent
24 of a trans son compared this situation to the need
25 to dial 911, but no one is on the other line anymore.

1 They want to call their doctor, and the doctor won't
2 be there anymore. They're trying to seek access to
3 that prescription. The prescription won't be there
4 anymore. We actually have trans people in the state
5 of Florida right now who are exploring other options
6 because they are forced to leave the state of Florida
7 because of what we are doing in this body.

8 And so just to close, no child can access
9 medical intervention without parental consent and
10 parental involvement, and no child can access this
11 type of medication without thorough, thorough,
12 thorough insight and counseling and permission from
13 multiple doctors, whether it's mental health
14 therapists or medical providers. Nothing happens
15 without that type of multilayered consent.

16 And I understand the concerns about any type
17 of clinical or surgical procedure, and surgery is
18 very, very rare for those under the age of 18. When
19 it does happen, these are children who are going to
20 cut off their own breasts if we don't help them. They
21 are wrapping bands around their chests so tight that
22 they can't breathe.

23 And so please try to put yourself into the
24 shoes of those impacted. Ignore the moral panic that
25 has been manufactured, many times by right-wing media,

1 and integrated into political campaigns to divide us
2 when we should be brought together. Respect and trust
3 parents and let kids, regardless of their gender
4 identity, to be kids and to reach their fullest
5 potential.

6 I choose hope, community solidarity, and
7 love. And I invite you to join me in voting no on
8 this bill.

9 Thank you, Members.

10 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Daley, you're
11 recognized.

12 REPRESENTATIVE DALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

13 I yield to Representative Harris.

14 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Harris, you're
15 recognized in debate.

16 REPRESENTATIVE HARRIS: Thank you,
17 Mr. Speaker.

18 I rise in opposition to this bill because
19 we are supposed to be working to keep Floridians
20 healthy, safe, and prosperous. We are not supposed
21 to be here to pass ambiguous bills and take away a
22 child's ability to be healthy and safe.

23 Florida ranks 40th in health care for
24 children. Want to protect children? 40th in health
25 care for children. And yet here we are taking away

1 healthcare from children.

2 None of the people in this chamber are
3 transgender, as far as we know. But we've heard from
4 parents of trans kids and trans adults in the Board of
5 Medicine, and osteopathic meetings, and committee
6 meetings, and through calls and emails about how
7 gender-affirming care has saved lives. And here is a
8 bulletin, 2021, AMA to states: Stop interfering in
9 the health care of transgender children.

10 That is the AMA, because the science backs
11 it, the science. I'm no biochem major, but my
12 daughter is, and I'd love for her to come here and
13 talk a little bit about genomics.

14 Care and treatment of transgender youth is
15 already well regulated. This bill is not necessary
16 because it is already well regulated. Before puberty,
17 trans girls and trans boys will simply change how they
18 present. It's just a matter of using their pronouns
19 and letting them express the identity they are.

20 For kids with gender dysphoria, they see
21 therapists and psychiatrists regularly, and nothing
22 is ever done without the consent of their parents.
23 Yeah, you can't take a wart off of a child without
24 their consent. Neither can you give them
25 gender-affirming care, because it's regulated. It's

1 already regulated.

2 This bill takes away the rights of parents
3 to do what they know best. And you know what?
4 Puberty blockers lessen the need for surgery, because
5 when you're forced to go through the wrong puberty,
6 you grow parts of your body that you don't want.

7 Remember that before medication is provided,
8 medical professionals are confident that the trans
9 kids don't think they are a different gender. This
10 isn't about I think, I might be a boy. These kids
11 know they are a different gender. My dear friend
12 Eleanor, she doesn't think she's a woman; she knows
13 she's a woman.

14 There has also been so much ugly information
15 about gender-affirming care. There have been lies
16 spoken that little kids are being mutilated. I
17 already told you, most little kids aren't even getting
18 medicine.

19 This bill not only targets and dehumanizes
20 trans children, but also targets the doctors who
21 provide care to them. You all are providing
22 doctors -- and we already have an issue in this state.
23 We're losing doctors. And this bill is going to
24 result in many medical professionals, doctors and
25 nurses, leaving this state.

1 So I want you all to understand, we heard
2 about the insurance impacts of this bill, the
3 unintended consequences of not having a doctor
4 available when you need one for whatever kind of
5 care you're looking for.

6 Before I close, I just want to talk to my
7 constituents. I met a wonderful constituent last
8 week. She came to my office. And, you know, she
9 expressed to me how scared she was, and she was
10 feeling a lot of anxiety. And I want her to know,
11 I'm your representative, and I want you to know
12 how beautifully created and powerfully made you are
13 and that you belong and you are welcome and you
14 are loved.

15 Please vote down on this bill.

16 Thank you.

17 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Daley, having
18 waived the remainder of time in his debate
19 section, we're now going to take up a recognition.

20 Representative Payne, you're recognized
21 for a recognition.

22 REPRESENTATIVE PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

23 Members, please join me in the East Gallery.

24 We have management members from Chemours. Chemours
25 is a mining company located in northeast Florida

1 who just completed a \$93 million project at Camp
2 Blanding. What's important about Chemours is they
3 mine minerals, titanium and zircon, which are on the
4 U.S. critical list of minerals vital to the aerospace
5 and national defense industries.

6 So, Members, help me welcome Connie Henderson,
7 Stuart Robertson, Elli Benakovich, Corinne Lavin, and
8 Jason Geiger. Welcome to the Florida House.

9 SPEAKER RENNER: Welcome to the Florida
10 House.

11 Representative Benjamin for recognition.

12 REPRESENTATIVE BENJAMIN: Thank you,
13 Mr. Speaker.

14 At this time I would like to recognize the
15 great leaders from the City of Miami Gardens. With us
16 this afternoon we have Councilman Reggie Leon, we have
17 Councilwoman Campbell, and we have the assistant city
18 manager, Vernita Nelson.

19 Please recognize the City of Miami Gardens.

20 SPEAKER RENNER: Welcome to the Florida
21 House.

22 Members, we're back in debate.

23 Representative Grant, you're recognized.

24 REPRESENTATIVE GRANT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

25 Would you please recognize Representative

1 Massullo in debate.

2 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Massullo,
3 you're recognized.

4 REPRESENTATIVE MUSSULLO: Thank you,
5 Mr. Speaker.

6 Members, we often hear the expression,
7 "We can't get there from here," or "We can't put the
8 genie back in the bottle," or "We've reached the
9 point of no return." And those phrases are often
10 just rationalizations of some way that we're trying to
11 assuage our disapproval of a situation that we
12 believe we can't change.

13 But, you see, the beauty, the beauty of what
14 we're doing in this chamber, the beauty of our system
15 that our forefathers have set up for us is that we
16 can change. We can change things. We can change
17 direction. And when we look at all of the problems
18 we have in this state, most of us are all on the same
19 page for affordable housing, for education, for health
20 care, for the environment. We differ, we differ on
21 the way we believe those problems can be solved, but
22 we all recognize them as being problems that we all
23 face.

24 But there is a problem in our society today
25 that we differ on its existence, and that is the

1 deterioration of our culture. And it is a problem
2 that we need to face, and I'm going to depersonalize
3 it because it has nothing to do with any individual.
4 It doesn't have anything to do with any of the people
5 that we're dealing with in this bill. It has to deal
6 with our society.

7 And let's look at it. Today we have more
8 mental health issues, particularly in our children,
9 than ever before. We have more incidences of suicide
10 in our young people, in our children, in young girls,
11 11 to 13 years old, than we have ever had in our
12 history.

13 And in a society with all of our
14 technological advances -- we have the Library of
15 Congress right here in our hands each and every day.
16 We have every convenience imaginable, every resource,
17 and yet we have in our society more dysphoria than we
18 have ever had in history.

19 And we have to stop, and we have to ask why.
20 Because, otherwise, we're like that frog in the water
21 that believes that there's no problem, and we're
22 slowly -- as the water slowly heats, we're getting
23 boiled.

24 And we try to normalize it by creating all
25 kinds of names and words and medical conditions, and

1 then we try to excuse the behavior that we feel is
2 wrong by saying, Oh, it's just freedom. And then we
3 try to criticize those who disagree with us and call
4 them all kinds of things, like homophobic and
5 misogynistic, racist, sexist, and even say they're
6 religious right-wing extremists in some way to try to
7 shut down the debate and the conversation.

8 Well, I want to take a little aside and talk
9 about religion since it was brought up so many times
10 today on this floor. Yesterday we had a prayer
11 breakfast, and in that prayer breakfast, we heard from
12 both sides of this chamber talk about how our power
13 comes from God. And I'll tell you something that I
14 believe, Members -- and you don't have to believe it,
15 but I believe it. I believe everyone on this earth
16 believes in God, even the atheists. They just believe
17 that's who they are. We need to stop and think a
18 little bit about what we can do to change our culture.

19 And so I actually believe it's our duty.
20 It's something that we need to address because there's
21 evil in our society. And you've heard it. Chair Fine
22 has made a point to say it several times in the last
23 couple of days. And that evil is so insidious that
24 we fail to recognize it. It is truly the wolf in
25 sheep's clothing, and it's going after our most

1 vulnerable population, our children, and we need to
2 recognize it. We need to recognize the sources of
3 dysphoria in our kids, because they are unhappy. They
4 are discontent. They are not satisfied with
5 themselves. And I don't know really what the
6 difference is between knowing something and thinking
7 something, but they think that they truly aren't who
8 they are, and I'll give you that. I'll accede that
9 to you.

10 But I will also say, like so many things
11 that we do in our world, we try to fill that void
12 with emptiness. And the statistics don't lie. The
13 facts are always true. And let's see what they do.

14 Well, discontent, this gender dysphoria that
15 we're talking about today, this void, how has it
16 changed through time? Thirty years ago you never
17 even heard of it. It wasn't even a condition. The
18 DSM-III, the manual that I used for psychiatry when I
19 was in medical school, described it only as a
20 psychological anomaly. It was only something that was
21 psychologically driven. There is still, even today,
22 no physiologic evidence, no evidence in our bodies
23 for those individuals that are gender dysphoric.
24 So why in the world would we think to treat a
25 psychological condition with pharmacological drugs

1 that affect physiology? And, see, we've made a
2 mistake? We thought, Oh, all these drugs we're using
3 are reversible. We're finding more and more and more
4 in other countries in the world that got a head start
5 on us that they're not reversible.

6 And so what is the incidence of this gender
7 dysphoria? How has it changed? In the last 30 years
8 in some countries it's increased 5,000 percent. And
9 will challenge you to find one other disease state
10 that has those type of incidence numbers. In the
11 United States gender dysphoria, since many of us who
12 are seniors stepped foot on this floor for the first
13 time in 2017, has increased 300 percent. And that
14 rate of increase is exponential, ladies and
15 gentlemen. If we don't step in and turn our society
16 and address our culture, I can't even imagine what it
17 will be when the freshmen that are so brilliant down
18 on this floor today step off for the last time. It's
19 our duty. It's our duty.

20 And so what have been the consequences of
21 what we thought was a good idea of treating a
22 psychological condition with physiologic drugs? Well,
23 here's what's happened. As we treat kids and block
24 their normal progression into puberty, we've seen
25 irreversible bone damage. We've seen irreversible

1 brain damage. We've seen incidences of tumors in the
2 brain. We've seen incidences of cardiovascular
3 anomalies that are irreversible. And what they're
4 finding -- the very people that have advocated for
5 this type of treatment are finding that those
6 individuals cannot have sexual satisfaction. And
7 I'm not going to use the word that starts with the
8 letter O because you all understand and know what
9 that is, but they can't ever achieve that. Now, think
10 about that just for a minute, because it's terrible.

11 And why are we treating these kids with
12 this? Well, let's look at that normal child that has
13 gender dysphoria, because that's usually not all
14 they have. They almost always have comorbidities.
15 It could be autism. It could be depression. It could
16 be anxiety, emotional issues. They could have
17 problems at home or other problems in their
18 environment. And, yes, they need therapy, but they
19 need mental health counseling. They don't need us to
20 screw up their sex. They don't us to screw up their
21 physiology.

22 That's the truth. That's things we can't
23 change, and we need to fight for this not because
24 we're a conservative, religious right-wing
25 legislature; we need to fight for this because it's

1 right.

2 Now, we've heard some things about insurance
3 companies, and here's my answer to that. What they
4 should do is the money they're spending right now on
5 transgender care, they should move it over and use it
6 for mental health, because that's something that
7 we need, more so than probably we realize.

8 And for those individuals that feel that
9 this type of therapy is well proven, there are study
10 after study after study that refutes the studies, and
11 study after study after study that actually show that
12 what they've done is horribly wrong. And I will tell
13 you this will go down as one of the most tragic
14 medical maladventures of our time. Mark my words.

15 Has there been any animal studies? Most
16 experts believe that nonhuman animals -- I almost
17 hate using that term because I don't consider us
18 an animal in the sense of another type of an animal.
19 We're a human being, and we're special in the sight
20 and the eyes of God -- they cannot have issues with
21 gender identity.

22 Anthony Fauci tried a study that was
23 financed with your taxpayer dollars through the NIH.
24 He wanted to give feminizing hormones to monkeys to
25 try to see if those monkeys react similarly to HIV as

1 transgender women. The only issue with the study was
2 the monkeys he was giving the hormones to aren't
3 susceptible to HIV virus, so that was \$205,000 of your
4 taxpayer money that went down the drain.

5 So I'm going to stop now, but I want to
6 leave you with this. It's been a pleasure and an
7 honor for me to work with Representative Fine on this
8 bill because I actually believe it's one of the most
9 important bills we're going to pass this year. We
10 need to change culture.

11 And, ladies and gentlemen, I'll tell you,
12 if there's a hill to climb and one to die on, that's
13 where we need to be, because it's for our children.
14 It's for our future.

15 I'll yield the rest of my time.

16 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Grant, you're
17 recognized.

18 REPRESENTATIVE GRANT: Waive our time.

19 SPEAKER RENNER: Thank you.

20 That concludes the time for debate.

21 Representative Fine, you are recognized to
22 close on the bill.

23 REPRESENTATIVE FINE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

24 I want to start by telling the freshmen who
25 stood up this week how proud I am of all of you. I

1 think you've shown your courage this week. And in
2 the time that I spend in the legislature, the moments
3 we've had doing this bill together in committee and
4 on the floor will be among my most precious. And I
5 couldn't have a better friend to work with on this.

6 But I'd like to talk to you about what this
7 bill and, frankly, what all of these bills are about,
8 because we're told they have a bigger and a larger
9 meaning. It isn't hate. It's not intolerance.

10 My sons, Jacob and David, get affirmed every
11 day. Wendy and I love them, and we care for them,
12 and we protect them as fiercely from evil as we can.
13 Some of you made that task a little harder over the
14 last week. So David was curious about what I was
15 doing this week. He asked me what I did yesterday.
16 I tried to tell him in as delicate and age-appropriate
17 way as I could. And then it struck me, there isn't an
18 age-appropriate way to explain puberty blockers to an
19 11-year-old or top surgery or why it's normal for a
20 man to dress like a woman.

21 You see these bills we've heard this week
22 and in this session, they're not about bathrooms.
23 They're not about books. They're not about pride
24 parades. They're not about pronouns. They're not
25 about blocking puberty. They are not about cutting

1 off body parts. These bills are about something much
2 larger. These bills are about whether we as a
3 legislature, as a state, and as a society believe in
4 the idea of childhood itself.

5 I want to tell you what the people screaming
6 out there believe. They believe that an 8-year-old
7 should have to keep track of 70 different pronouns
8 that their teachers might choose. They believe that
9 a 9-year-old should have access to books at school
10 about sex. They believe that a 10-year-old should be
11 able to get an abortion without talking to a parent.
12 They believe that an 11-year-old should be able to go
13 to a sexual performance of a man dressed like a woman.
14 They believe that a 12-year-old should be used as a
15 test subject in some kind of gruesome drug trial. And
16 they believe that a 13-year-old should be able to
17 have her breasts cut off.

18 They do not believe in the innocence of
19 childhood. They believe this, and then they wonder
20 why we have record levels of depression and mental
21 health issues with our children. They believe this,
22 and then they ask why so many child suicides have
23 skyrocketed. They believe this, and then they ask
24 why children shoot up schools.

25 It's because we have failed our children,

1 all of them. We have failed to give them the ultimate
2 gender-affirming care, to affirm they are creatures of
3 God, made in his image, that they were made the way
4 they are, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with
5 it. God doesn't make mistakes. I heard that from
6 the back rows.

7 They don't need a lifetime of drugs and
8 surgery to be something they are not. We have failed
9 to teach our children there is right and wrong in this
10 world, that values matter, that there is a God. We
11 have failed our children. We have failed to fight
12 for them.

13 Members, they are begging us to help them.
14 I agree with the back rows on one thing. Every
15 so-called transgender person begged us for help
16 in committees. Ralph and I have talked about it.
17 They are not evil. They are victims. I don't hate
18 them. My heart breaks for what has been done to
19 them. I'm haunted by the stories of the children I
20 have talked to who were told this was a good idea
21 and then have had their lives destroyed as a result.
22 I fight for those children.

23 There is evil in this world, and we can
24 fight it here today. We can reject their made-up
25 words of gender-affirming care, cisgender, nonbinary,

1 and whatever nonsense they come up with next. We
2 lean in because we are right. We can fight for
3 children. We can declare in unambiguous terms that
4 defying the natural process of puberty is not health
5 care; it is an abomination. We can fight for
6 children. We can declare -- and we should scream it
7 from the rooftops as long as they are out there that
8 mutilating a child to remove perfectly healthy organs
9 is not health care; it is butchery.

10 We can fight to return childhood to the era
11 of innocence where children knew the basics, what
12 bathroom to use, what their pronouns were, that there
13 are boys and that there are girls and they don't
14 have to wonder about it.

15 With these votes on all of these bills, we
16 fight back. There is evil in this world, and we can
17 stand against it today, not just because we can,
18 because we should and because we must. We can fight
19 for children.

20 Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

21 SPEAKER RENNER: Representative Fine, having
22 closed on his bill, the question now recurs on final
23 passage of CS for SB 254.

24 The clerk will unlock the machine. The
25 members will proceed to vote.

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Have all members voted?

Have all members voted?

The clerk will lock the machine and announce
the vote.

THE CLERK: 82 yeas, 31 nays, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER RENNER: Show the bill passes.

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF IOWA)
COUNTY OF WARREN)

I, Terri L. Martin, Certified Shorthand Reporter, certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically transcribe the foregoing audio recording to the best of my ability and that the transcript is a complete record of my stenographic notes.

Dated this 17th of August, 2023.

/s/ Terri L. Martin
Terri L. Martin, CSR, RPR, CRR