

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE
Nashville Division**

L.W., by and through her parents and next friends, Samantha Williams and Brian Williams, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

JONATHAN SKRMETTI, in his official capacity as the Tennessee Attorney General and Reporter, et al.,

Defendants.

Civil No. 3:23-cv-00376

**DECLARATION OF REBECCA ROE IN SUPPORT OF
PLAINTIFFS' MOTION FOR A PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION**

I, REBECCA ROE, pursuant to 28 U.S.C §1746, declare as follows:

1. I have personal knowledge of the facts set forth in this Declaration and could and would testify competently to those facts if called as a witness.
2. I currently reside in Tennessee where I live with my husband and my fifteen-year-old son, Ryan.
3. I have lived in Tennessee since I was fifteen years old. My husband, Ryan's father, has lived here his entire life. Tennessee is the only home that my son, Ryan, has ever known. We have family, friends and community here.
4. Ryan is transgender. When he was born, he was designated a female sex at birth and we gave him a typically feminine name (he did not change his name to Ryan until later). Though it didn't really strike me as unusual at the time, everything Ryan played with as a child was more typical of boys. He loved dinosaurs and trains and was extraordinarily active.

5. As a child Ryan was very vocal and outgoing but that started to change as puberty started.

6. When Ryan began to go through puberty in fifth grade, he started to cover up his body with baggy clothes and asked to shop in the boys' clothing department at stores. He also asked to cut his hair short.

7. During this time Ryan also became more anxious and withdrawn. He went from always talking to hardly speaking at all in public. At one point he said to me that he might be transgender but he wasn't sure. He also said that he thought maybe his anxiety and discomfort would dissipate. But I watched it grow worse and worse.

8. When Ryan got his first period, he had a serious panic attack. He couldn't stop crying and told us that everything felt wrong in his body as it was changing. At that point he told us that he knew he was a boy and couldn't deny it anymore.

9. Neither my husband nor I knew what it meant to be transgender before Ryan came out to us. My first reaction was to say, "there is no rush to label anything." I told Ryan that maybe his feelings would go away. I was mostly just so scared for what it would mean for his life, especially since everything I saw in the news about transgender people involved them getting hurt or killed. I also thought maybe I had failed as a mother because I had been unable to understand the pain he was in.

10. I started to research everything I could about what it meant to be transgender. I googled it, ordered books on Amazon, and joined Facebook support groups for parents of transgender children. We also spoke to Ryan's pediatrician about him being transgender, and Ryan began to see an onsite therapist at his pediatrician's office.

11. I wanted to get Ryan support for his mental health before beginning medical treatment like hormone therapy. I also wanted to learn more about any medical treatment that could lead to permanent changes to Ryan's body. In the meantime, at home, Ryan continued to dress in a more masculine manner and we used he/him pronouns for him and referred to him as Ryan.

12. In sixth grade, Ryan started to come out as transgender to more people in his life, particularly his close friends, but he still was not formally "out" as transgender at school. During this time, I was worried about him because he was becoming more and more withdrawn and at school he was being bullied by kids who learned that he is transgender.

13. In sixth grade Ryan's anxiety was so severe he would often vomit before school in the morning. He was prescribed anti-anxiety medication and that stopped the vomiting and some of the extreme anxiety around school but all of his distress around his body only got worse.

14. In seventh grade, one of Ryan's teachers asked the class if anyone went by a different name than the one listed on the school roster. Though she was referring to nick names, that created an opening for Ryan who then came out publicly in front of the whole class. He told his teacher that he was transgender and went by the name Ryan. After that we let the entire school know, including the entire administration. I thought maybe being able to be publicly out at school would help to stop the bullying but it didn't.

15. After seventh grade, Ryan's therapist was leaving the practice so she gave us a list of potential referrals. I had also begun to research LGBTQ-friendly therapists in Nashville. A Nashville-based therapist was recommended by several families and so we started to see her for Ryan's therapy.

16. That therapist formally diagnosed Ryan with gender dysphoria. Ryan would have individual sessions with her and sometimes Ryan and I saw her together to discuss possible treatment options.

17. During that time, I really noticed how much Ryan was suffering. It had been two years since he had come out. He had been in therapy, had legally changed his name, and had fully socially transitioned but his pain was not improving. He started to engage in self-harm. I made sure he continued to see his therapist to discuss the self-harm and anxiety but I was worried therapy wasn't going to resolve his distress.

18. I had done research about endocrinologists in the area to bring Ryan in for a consultation about puberty blockers. We made an appointment for August of 2021 with Dr. Cassandra Brady at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital. During our first meeting with Dr. Brady, she talked to us about different endocrine treatments for gender dysphoria. She x-rayed Ryan's hand to see if the growth plates in his bones had fused and did blood work to check on his pubertal development. After these tests, she informed us that, by that point, Ryan's puberty was too far along for puberty blockers.

19. Ryan was continuing to have severe distress around his period and we talked about that with Dr. Brady. She discussed birth control as a means to stop his periods to minimize the distress he was feeling. She prescribed the birth control treatment to Ryan at that first visit.

20. At that point Ryan was thirteen and Dr. Brady gave us information to take home and review with my husband and Ryan about testosterone treatment. She wanted us, as a family, to read about all the potential effects of treatment, the risks and the benefits.

21. After that appointment, the three of us went through all the paperwork that Dr. Brady had sent home with us and discussed every possible effect, benefit and risk of treatment.

We also discussed testosterone with Ryan's therapist for about six months. During these conversations we talked to Ryan about the potential impact on his fertility. He has always said he didn't want children, but he also told us that, if that ever changed, he understands that there are many ways to form a family with children including through adoption.

22. Ryan's distress around his voice in particular was severely impeding his well-being in life. He was still barely talking in public and wouldn't participate in school because of distress about his voice.

23. It was hard to see my child in so much pain. I was scared and didn't want to move too fast with medical treatment. But I also worried, that in my fear, I had moved too slowly for what my child needed. As I watched my son suffer and decline, I realized we couldn't wait anymore.

24. In January of 2022, when Ryan was in eighth grade, we went back to Dr. Brady to see if testosterone therapy would be appropriate. At that point Ryan was fourteen. During our January 2022 visit, Dr. Brady talked to us again about the treatment. She discussed possible risks and side effects, including those related to fertility. We went through each potential side effect and had to mark our initials after each one to indicate that we understood. Ryan asked questions about the different effects on his body and she answered all of his questions.

25. During that visit we did more bloodwork and then we went through how to do testosterone shots. Dr. Brady prescribed Ryan testosterone at that visit and when we got home and filled the prescription he had his first shot of testosterone.

26. The process of beginning testosterone was the most deliberate and careful medical process that we had ever been through for Ryan.

27. It has been about fifteen months since Ryan started to receive testosterone to treat his gender dysphoria. He has transformed back into the vocal, outgoing child that we saw before puberty. It is amazing to see him willingly take family photos on vacation and watch him take selfies, whereas before treatment he refused to be photographed. For years he suffered. Nothing could address the dysphoria he felt the way this medication has.

28. This treatment has changed my son's life.

29. When I learned about the legislation that would prohibit him from getting this treatment, I was terrified. Cutting off Ryan's care is not an option but trying to manage medical care outside of Tennessee or being forced to move would be terribly difficult for our family. I did everything I could to let lawmakers know how important this treatment was for my family, including writing e-mails, calling and signing petitions.

30. For years I had heard people in government say during COVID, "I don't co-parent with the government, why is the government trying to co-parent with me?" I didn't understand why those same lawmakers were now trying to use their power in government to interfere with my parenting.

31. After the Governor signed the law, I heard from other parents of transgender adolescents that medical care would start to be cut-off on July 1st even though the law was technically going to allow it to continue until March of 2024 for people like Ryan who had started on treatment. I started to panic that his care might be cut off quickly. On March 7, 2023, I sent a message through the online portal to the providers at Vanderbilt to inquire about how to maintain Ryan's medical treatment. I told them that I had heard that because of the law, he would no longer be able to receive treatment beginning July 1, 2023. On March 8, 2023, one of the nurses from the Vanderbilt Clinic wrote back confirming that: "Vanderbilt will not be allowed to provide gender

affirming care after July 1st for patients under 18.” My heart sank and I began to panic for my son and our family. I am hearing the same thing about care at other providers across Tennessee.

32. I have been calling clinics in other states to try to get an appointment for Ryan in the event this law goes into effect. My husband and I are terrified about what would happen to our son if his treatment were cut off. We currently are on a waitlist to be seen in Minnesota but that waitlist is over one-year long. We have an appointment in Ohio for June but are concerned that a similar bill is pending there that would ban treatment. It will be costly and difficult to travel out of state to continue treatment but we will do whatever is needed to protect Ryan. If we are unable to find a way to continue treatment for our son while living in Tennessee we will have to move. It is simply not an option to cut Ryan off from this care. I worry about his ability to survive and losing him would break me.

33. Moving would be incredibly difficult for our family. It would mean giving up my husband’s job, our proximity to family, and all of our friends. Ryan has his therapist here and a support group. Tennessee is our home and leaving is painful to imagine. But watching Ryan suffer if his treatment is taken away is the worst thing I can think of.

I declare under the penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Dated: April 17, 2023

Rebecca Roe

REBECCA ROE