

Gender and Medicine: Two Questions for Arkansas Legislators

As I write this column, Arkansas House Bill 1570 (the “Save Adolescents From Experimentation Act”) awaits the signature or veto of Governor Asa Hutchinson, having passed in the state House on March 10 and in the Senate on March 29.

If it became law, the bill would forbid physicians and other healthcare professionals to “provide gender transition procedures to any individual under eighteen (18) years of age” or to refer such an individual to other healthcare providers for such procedures.

Rather than argue over the nature of gender, the validity of gender dysphoria and gender transition, and other complicated questions, I’d simply like to ask the legislators who passed this bill two questions.

Question Number One: Are each of you medical doctors with expertise (preferably board certification) in any or all of the various specialties that relate to the matter?

Two such specialties that come to mind are psychiatry and endocrinology.

My impression, based on a quick look at legislator pages, is that few, if any, of you can claim such expertise.

Yet you just passed legislation preemptively substituting your collective political judgment for the individual medical judgments of professionals who’ve put in many years of hard work — in school and in actual practice — to become qualified to make those judgments.

Question #2: Are the 135 members of the Arkansas General Assembly (100 representatives and 35 senators) the parents of all of the 800,000 Arkansans under the age of 18?

If so, congratulations on your remarkable prowess at going forth and multiplying.

If not, then you’re once again substituting your collective (and uninformed) political judgment for the individual (and, if not fully informed, at least more informed) judgments of those kids’ ACTUAL parents where the children’s needs are concerned.

Interestingly, I see that of the General Assembly’s 135 members, 103 are Republicans, and my impression is that most of you who are Republicans publicly style yourselves “conservatives.”

Whatever happened to the “conservative” Republican lines on business (best operated with

minimal government interference or regulation — yes, medical practices are businesses) and family (e.g. the sanctity of parental authority in nearly every aspect of child-rearing)?

I'd ask what's up with the 180-degree reversal where gender identity is concerned, but let's be honest: While "conservative" Republicans talk those two lines quite loudly, they seldom walk either line much at all.

I'd also say these legislators should be ashamed of themselves, but shame is obviously as absent from their makeup as respect for their constituents' liberties.