

07/01/2025

To: The Justice Committee

Kei te rangatira, tēnā koe,

We are writing on behalf of the Rūnaka Taiohi o Ōtautahi / Christchurch Youth Council, a group of rangatahi volunteers aged 12 - 24 from across the Ōtautahi region.

As a youth organisation who works with, and has trust in LGBTQ+ local youth organisations - InsideOUT and Qtopia, and would like to submit in support of the work they do, and their sentiment regarding the consultation on safety measures for the use of puberty blockers in young people with gender-related health needs.

The current prescribing model is generally through informed consent, between the whānau, medical professional, and the young person. This involves making it clear the benefits and risks. Currently, there is no extra medical training needed outside of their medical training to prescribe puberty blockers, however there are national gender-affirming guidelines endorsed by AusPATH, PATHA, the New Zealand Sexual Health Society and the New Zealand Society of Endocrinology and by the Ministry of Health in their position statement. We agree with Qtopia and InsideOUT that this is a robust and safe process for rangatahi, and there should be no additional restrictions on access to puberty blockers for the trans young people who need them.

Mental Health Impact of Restricting Puberty Blockers

1. Increased Gender Dysphoria (for transgender individuals):

Puberty blockers help prevent distress caused by physical changes that don't align with one's gender identity. Without access, gender dysphoria may worsen, leading to greater anxiety, depression, and higher risk of self-harm or suicidal thoughts.

2. Worsening Mental Health Issues:

Without blockers, transgender youth may face stress, emotional instability, and feelings of hopelessness. This can lead to more severe mental health problems, including anxiety and depression, and increased risk of social withdrawal.

3. Social Stigma and Rejection:

Restricting access can lead to increased bullying or discrimination, as transgender youth may appear physically mismatched with their gender identity. This can damage self-esteem and cause feelings of shame, social isolation, and worsening mental health.

4. Impact on Children with Medical Conditions:

For children with conditions like precocious puberty, blockers help delay premature physical changes. Without them, children may experience distress, embarrassment, and low self-esteem due to early and out-of-sync physical development, which can lead to emotional and psychological difficulties.

5. Long-Term Psychological Effects:

Delaying or denying access to puberty blockers can lead to deeper gender dysphoria and a loss of control over one's own body, increasing mental health struggles as individuals grow older.

6. **Family Impact:**

Families of transgender youth may experience emotional distress, as they watch their children struggle without the necessary medical support. This can add to caregiver anxiety and mental health challenges.

In conclusion further restricting access to puberty blockers can significantly harm the mental health and wellbeing of transgender youth. We understand that the current regulation is working well and that further restrictions would be counter intuitive. We trust in the work that Qtopia and InsideOUT has undertaken in their submissions and working with rangatahi, and tautoko their submissions.

Ngā Mihi Nui,

Beth Gibson and Vicky Chia

On Behalf of Rūnaka Taiohi o Ōtautahi / Christchurch Youth Council Incorporated Executive Committee