



**Virginia State Board of Education  
Thursday, July 27, 2023  
Comments Submitted by Virginia Gentles  
Arlington, VA Parent**

**MODEL POLICIES ON ENSURING PRIVACY, DIGNITY, AND RESPECT FOR  
ALL STUDENTS AND PARENTS IN VIRGINIA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

My name is Ginny Gentles. I am the director of the Independent Women's Forum's Education Freedom Center and the mother of two former Arlington Public Schools (APS) students.

Like many Virginia families, we left the public school system because we no longer trust our residentially-assigned schools to educate our children.

Too many elements of the Virginia public school system prioritize activism over academics. For example, the activist-drafted **March 2021 Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) Model Policies for the Treatment of Transgender Students in Virginia's Public Schools:**

- require teachers to address children by their ever-shifting array of pronouns;
- abolish sex-specific facilities and even choirs organized by sex;
- encourage schools to develop secretive "action plans to support the student's transition;" and
- consider reporting parents **who affirm their child's biological sex** to Child Protective Services.

Activists regularly claim that parents can't be trusted, presuming that they will harm their children. Yet the presumption should be that parents **can and should** be involved in their children's lives. If a highly sensitive middle school student who is struggling with puberty's social pressures and hormonal tsunami decides a new identity, name, and pronoun combination might provide some relief, it is BIZARRE to assume that her parents will abuse her or kick her out of the home. **Of course they won't. It's time to stop threatening students and parents with hyperbolic predictions of violence, homelessness, and suicide.**

I support the **2023 Model Policies on Ensuring Privacy, Dignity, and Respect for All Students and Parents in Virginia's Public Schools**, which protect children from

government employees who want to require school staff to deceive parents and encourage young women to medicalize their insecurities.

Pressuring a child to choose a new identity and name, and then hiding the child's social transition from her parents is **manipulative and cruel**.

### ***Social Transitions are Manipulative***

The Virginia schools that follow the 2021 Model Policies teach children from young ages that they may have been born in the wrong body and pressure them to choose from the growing list of gender identities. This is confusing and destabilizing for emotionally vulnerable children.

The children caught up in the social contagion of gender ideology often have underlying conditions, including ADHD or autism spectrum, and struggle with lagging social skills, obsessive rumination, depression and anxiety. **Studies** and the **stories shared by detransitioners** reveal a tendency to self-harm and suffer from eating disorders. Puberty is particularly hard for these emotionally-intense young people, and they're understandably seeking the relief offered by the elusive promise of "trans joy."

These vulnerable children, often girls, deserve their parents' involvement as they struggle through puberty, but the 2021 Model Policies intentionally drive a painful wedge between parents and children. Parents who love their children and would do anything to keep them safe are shoved aside by arrogant school staff who have the full power of the education bureaucracy behind them.

### ***Medical Transitions are Cruel***

Psychosocial transitions espoused by the 2021 Model Policies cruelly push children down a one-way path into medical transitions. No longer content with just changing her name and pronouns, a young girl who feels her gender identity does not align with her body will begin puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, top surgery - which involves cutting off her healthy breasts, and even surgeries that remove the skin from her arm or thigh to create a fake penis. Puberty blockers begin as early as age 8, hormones at 12 and 13, and breast removals at age 15 and sometimes earlier.

School staff and bureaucrats eager to oppose the 2023 Model Policies must acknowledge the irreversible damage that so many young people experience after

transitioning, **including** negative impacts on bone density, cognitive development, cardiovascular health, fertility, and sexual function.

The New York Times has exposed some of the **dangers of puberty blockers**, and Reuters questioned the **impact of social media and peer influence** on young women exploring gender identities and the **long-term safety and efficacy** of “gender-affirming care”.

Activist-drafted policies disregard these **well-documented risks**, choosing to eagerly serve the broader radical agenda, regardless of the harm inflicted upon vulnerable individuals and their families.

### **Enrollment Consequences**

Knowing that Arlington Public Schools **won't comply** with the 2023 Model Policies, my family won't return to public schools. I assume that the state government does want Virginia's public school enrollment to plummet and to face the resulting teacher layoffs. Perhaps implementation of these policies will prevent more families from quietly leaving public schools.

“A parent has a fundamental right to make decisions concerning the upbringing, education, and care of the parent's child.”<sup>1</sup> Virginia parents instinctively know this. Virginia state law codifies that fundamental right. Bureaucrats captured by well-funded and aggressive activist organizations should not undermine parents and disregard state law by issuing guidance like the 2021 policies.

The new 2023 Model Policies protect emotionally vulnerable students, respect parents' rights to be involved in their children's lives, and free teachers from the burden of having to keep secrets from parents. Please support and enforce the revised policies. Keep children safe, end secretive and destructive gender support plans, and affirm that parents have primary responsibility for their children's education and health.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 1-240.1 of the Code of Virginia