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UAB Doctor: No Legislature Should Be Any Child's First or Worst Bully

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"The bill passes with a favorable report." House Judiciary Chairman Hill's voice showed no enthusiasm. The air was heavy. I put my head in my hands, felt the brief warmth of my escaping tears and willed the remainder to stay away. Again, the Alabama Legislature may soon send a truly painful piece of legislation to Governor Ivey. Hours of debate by a thoughtful Judiciary Committee reached two stark points of bipartisan consensus. HB266/SB184 was among the hardest bills they had ever been asked to consider and also among the worst.

Alabama's Vulnerable Child Compassion and Protection Act (VCAP) would criminalize the few pediatricians providing youth-focused gender-affirming healthcare. Medical care about which most state lawmakers previously knew nothing. Nuanced, evidence-based care for youth whose gender identity doesn't align with their sex assigned at birth. Care delivered on a subspecialty level, deeply studied and continually refined. As one of those providers, I sat in attendance. I saw elected public servants abruptly forced into critical medical decision-making. The knowledge they needed is imparted during medical school, residency and molded by years of clinical care and voluminous literature review. It is impossible to acquire in a few weeks. Yet our legislative processes thrust them into this conundrum. Their disdain was palpable in the weight of the moment's silence.