



HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
TEACHING HOSPITAL

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May 29, 2024

The Honorable Leo T. Sorokin
United States District Court Judge
United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts
John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse
1 Courthouse Way
Boston, MA 02210

Re: *United States v. Catherine Leavy*, 22-cr-10271-LTS

Your Honor,

This victim impact statement is being submitted on behalf of Boston Children's Hospital ("BCH" or "the Hospital") in the case *United States v. Leavy*. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

While BCH does not tolerate violence of any kind (whether actual or threatened) targeting its patients and their families, its doctors and staff, or the community, the circumstances of Ms. Leavy's case are unique. In particular, BCH views Ms. Leavy as one of a number of individuals who have been manipulated by an orchestrated disinformation campaign targeting pediatric gender-affirming care. Ms. Leavy was responding to those lies on August 30, 2022 when she made her bomb threat to the Hospital. Through the Communities for Restorative Justice program, Ms. Leavy has had an opportunity to meet with representatives of BCH and learn about the live-saving gender-affirming care at BCH. She has expressed remorse and apologized for her actions. We believe her to be sincere in her misunderstanding of the situation and her regret about the chain of events her actions triggered. Accordingly, at this stage, the Hospital does not believe a sentence of incarceration would serve Ms. Leavy, BCH, or its community.

I. Background on Boston Children's Hospital, the GeMS Program, and its Gender-Affirming Care

Located in the Longwood neighborhood, BCH is one of the leading pediatric hospitals in the nation and is dedicated to improving and advancing the health and well-being of children around the world. It is the primary pediatric teaching hospital for Harvard Medical School, and the largest pediatric research enterprise in the world. With more than 40 clinical departments and 258 specialized clinical programs, BCH provides a complete range of health care services for children of all ages.

BCH's gender-affirming care is offered through multiple programs. The Gender Multispecialty Service ("GeMS") program focuses on providing health care to gender-diverse and transgender children and their families. Founded in 2007, GeMS was the first major program in the United States focused on serving this community through a comprehensive multi-disciplinary approach to care. Since its founding, GeMS has cared for more than 1,000 families and currently maintains an extensive waiting list of patients seeking care. GeMS provides physical and psychological assessment, ongoing medical care, and additional referrals as needed. The Center for Gender Surgery is a multidisciplinary program that provides surgical therapies for the purpose of gender affirmation. The Center is composed of specialists in plastic surgery, urology, gynecology, otolaryngology, and social work. The Transgender Reproductive Health Service in the Division of Gynecology offers a breadth of medical and surgical care for gynecologic, sexual, and reproductive health care. Finally, the Division of Adolescent/Young Adult Medicine and other programs also offer primary care for transgender and gender-diverse individuals. BCH requires parent or guardian consent for any gender-affirming care for individuals younger than 18-years-old and delivers care consistent with Massachusetts and federal law respecting the rights of its patients to receive care.

II. The Instigators' Disinformation Campaign

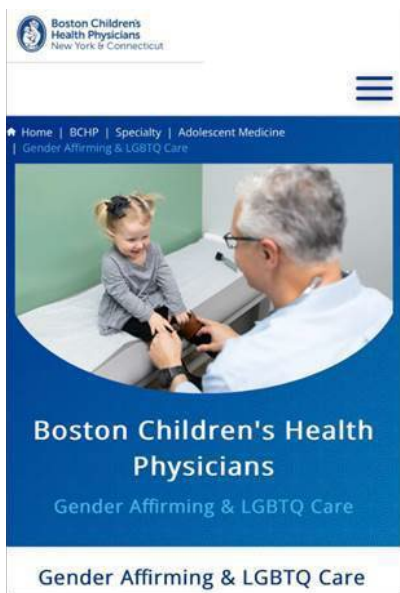
Beginning in August 2022 and continuing to the present, BCH, its patients, doctors, and staff have been the target of an orchestrated campaign of disinformation to threaten and intimidate the Hospital and its doctors and staff from providing gender-affirming care. This campaign has been primarily carried out by four individuals that began a public campaign using their respective social media accounts to spread disinformation to their millions of followers about health care provided to gender-diverse and transgender children at pediatric hospitals around the nation. In particular, these four instigators have posted inflammatory falsehoods about the health care provided at these hospitals, claiming that there was "castration," and "butchering, mutilating, and sterilizing" of children occurring. One instigator went so far as to write to his 2.4 million followers on X: "The trans agenda was invented by pedophilic psychologists, degenerate quacks, lunatic sexologists, literal Nazi scientists, and other assorted deviants. A collection of the most despicable monsters imaginable came up with all of this stuff."

While many pediatric hospitals around the country were targeted, none more so than BCH and its GeMS program. For example, on August 11, 2022, one instigator, whose X account has approximately 2.6 million followers, posted fourteen separate incendiary tweets about BCH, GeMS, and its gender-affirming care, falsely claiming "gender-affirming hysterectomies for young girls" were occurring, and writing that the hospital "needs to be shut down." Another of the instigators posted a video which stated, "According to Boston Children's Hospital, literally every toddler who has ever been born or will ever be born is trans. Now if it seems like they are casting the widest imaginable available net to capture the most children they can and put them all on a path to sterilization and butchery before they can even talk, well that's because that's exactly what these monsters are doing." Another instigator tweeted: "Children cannot consent to puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, or 'gender-affirming' surgeries. Stop the child abuse."

In truth and in fact, BCH and its providers have not stated that "every toddler" is trans, nor have they engaged in "sterilization" or "butchery." BCH does not perform genital surgeries on patients under 18-years-old as part of gender-affirming care and does not provide any gender-affirming care to minor patients without the consent of the patients' parents or guardians.

In addition to disseminating these false allegations, the instigators also are singling out specific BCH doctors who provide care to gender-diverse and transgender children, such as by posting edited videos of BCH doctors. One of the instigators posted a video of a BCH doctor explaining transgender care, and added his own note that stated: “Boston Children’s Hospital blocks your child’s puberty, cuts off body parts, and sterilizes them.” The instigator has suggested violence directed at doctors who provide gender-affirming care. Specifically, he wrote in March 2023 that “[a] prison sentence is the least that doctors who transition kids should get. They should be thankful if that’s all that ever happens to them. During no other era in human history would we have been so kind.” A few weeks later, he wrote: “We do not have enough millstones for doctors who transition kids,” a biblical reference to the punishment of hanging a millstone around a person’s neck to cause drowning. In May 2023, another instigator posted on her X account: “There will be no safe space left in this country for child mutilators and butchers by the time we’re done.”

Below is an example of picture from the BCH website that was manipulated by one of the instigators and posted on social media:



The image was spliced from two different pictures on BCH's website, one from the main website, and another one from the gender-affirming care website:



The manipulation of the pictures demonstrates the instigators' intentional disinformation designed to incite and inflame. The day after this was posted, one of the other instigators reposted the same manipulated image and the telephone number for the Center for Gender Surgery: "Give Boston childrens a call to let them know how you feel about the mutilation of healthy children." That weekend, the Center received multiple menacing voicemails discussing gender-affirming care including one from a male caller who stated "Listen fucking closely... you're sick, fucking disgusting human. It's fucking disgusting what you do. I hope somebody finds you and fucking runs you over with a fucking bus. You're fucking sick." Another caller left a voicemail message stating "you are mutilating children and the blood will be on your hands."

The instigators' public posts often are spread quickly by other online users through re-postings. The instigators themselves encourage each other publicly and amplify each other's voices by reposting messages on their respective social media accounts. In addition, the instigators' messages are amplified by media platforms and personalities. Indeed, one of the instigators described gender-affirming care in a television interview as "the biggest child abuse scandal in modern medicine history." Another instigator claimed in a web program that "the LGBTQ community has become a cult," "doctors are mutilating kids," and "[t]here are a lot of parents who are told that either you have a dead kid or you have a trans kid, so it's really coming from higher up than just parents." The instigator concluded that the LGBTQ community are "bad people. They're just evil people, and they want to groom kids. They're recruiting."

III. The Ensuing Threats and Abuse Targeting BCH and its Doctors

Predictably, following such false and incendiary rhetoric by the instigators, BCH and other pediatric hospitals across the nation have been and continue to be the target of online abuse and violent threats. Such abuse has included bomb threats directed towards the hospitals, death threats targeting the doctors, and related profane, violent, abusive, racist, anti-Semitic, and anti-LGBTQ+ statements.

With respect to BCH, the abusive messages have come in several forms: threatening and abusive telephone calls placed to the hospital's general appointment line; threatening and profane messages submitted through the hospital's online appointment registration system; threatening and profane

messages sent to doctors via email or telephones; mail to doctors at the hospital and at their homes bearing swastikas and other violent imagery; and threatening and harassing messages posted publicly on X and other social media sites. Most significantly, BCH received several specific bomb threats over the past two years which required a law enforcement response and partial evacuations of the hospital. These threats are directly tied to the instigators' inflammatory disinformation campaign.

Other threats have come by email. For example, as pictured below, on November 16, 2022, an email bomb threat against both BCH and the personal homes of BCH doctors caused disruption of patient care operations and required Massachusetts State Police to sweep the homes of numerous BCH doctors using explosive detection canines.

From: Ukrloh <Ukrloh@proton.me>
Sent: Wednesday, November 16, 2022 9:41 AM
To: Children's Advocacy Network
<ChildrensAdvocacyNetwork@childrens.harvard.edu>; rick.sobey@bostonherald.com;
mediarelations@pd.boston.gov; crime.stoppers@pd.boston.gov;
newstips@whdh.com; newstips@wbztv.com; tips@boston.com;
info@bostonpolicerelief.org
Subject: Bombs in Boston Childrne's hospital

“You are all sick disgusting degenerates, you perform sex change operations and give hormones and otherwise destroy the bodies of minors and young adults, people who are suffering phsyolocigcally [*sic*]. You don't care about their well being, this is about enriching yourselves. You are some of the worst people and you will all fucking die. We placed bombs in the Gender Multispecialty Service (GeMS) at the Boston children's hospitial [*sic*]. We placed bombs in the houses of 3 of the doctors as well. Fuck you”

When these threats have come into the Hospital, in whatever form, law enforcement has responded. BCH is grateful for the work of the Boston Police Department, the Boston Regional Intelligence Center, the Massachusetts State Police, the FBI, and the U.S. Attorney's Office.

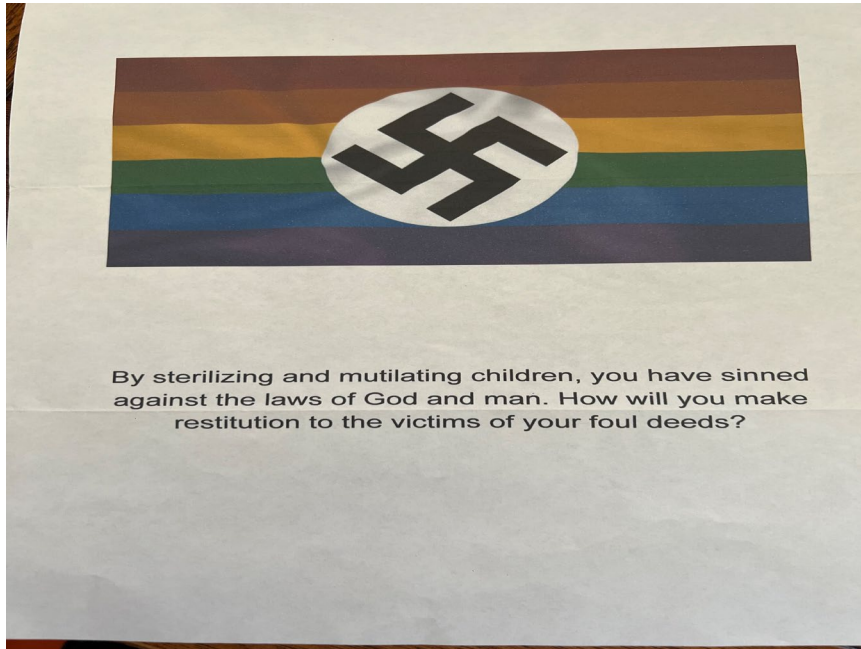
IV. Impact on BCH

The disinformation campaign has had an impact on BCH, its doctors, staff, and patients. While it has not stopped the provision of health care to gender-diverse and transgender children and their families as the instigators intended, it has disrupted the BCH community in numerous ways.

The Director of the GeMS program has stated that the threatening emails and calls have negatively affected the doctors and staff, and explained that one doctor even decided not to accept any new patients. The Associate Director of GeMS has explained that many doctors and staff feel unsafe and have suffered from mental health distress and burnout. A BCH staffer explained that the bomb threats have been particularly disruptive and frightening. Front-line staff whose responsibilities include answering the phones, emails, or the appointment system have reported increased stress and anxiety, leading BCH to divert resources from patient care to caring for its own staff. It has also been difficult to recruit and hire new staff because job applicants have heard about the threats and decided to forego these positions.

The specific BCH doctors who have been targeted have had their lives significantly upended. For example, one targeted BCH doctor stated that she experienced fear for her personal safety and that

of her family. She has received specific threats, including a swastika delivered to her home with a threatening letter:



Another targeted BCH doctor has also been the target of repeated violent threats and harassment. Following posted disinformation about surgical treatment of patients that mentioned his name, the doctor received numerous death threats. The doctor has stated that the harassment campaign has taken a severe toll on him, causing him stress, anxiety, and sleeplessness. It has also led him to question whether to continue practicing in the field of gender-affirming care.

In sum, your Honor, the organized disinformation campaign and been a nightmare for the hardworking BCH doctors and staff who have dedicated their lives to providing the best medical care to children of all ages. BCH doctors and staff have suffered stress, anxiety, depression, severe weight loss, and despair. In spite of this impact, the BCH commitment to providing gendering affirming care and to support our patient and families remains strong.

V. Catherine Leavy's Case and Sentencing

It is against this backdrop that Ms. Leavy's actions must be viewed. On August 30, 2022, just weeks after the most incendiary statements about BCH's care by the instigators, Ms. Leavy, called the main phone number at BCH and threatened, "[t]here is a bomb on the way to the hospital. You better evacuate everybody, you sickos." Ms. Leavy's threat caused disruption to the Hospital and its operations, as it was locked down while the police investigated the threat.

Following her plea in September 2023, Ms. Leavy participated in a Communities for Restorative Justice program. Two BCH representatives took part in the program as well. The BCH representatives found Ms. Leavy to be a young woman who has faced significant challenges in her life and was manipulated by the instigators' online disinformation campaign. It was the instigators' campaign that led Ms. Leavy to make the bomb threat to BCH.


Ms. Leavy has since learned about BCH and the gender-affirming care that is provided to patients. Ms. Leavy has apologized for her actions and wrote a thank you letter to the BCH representatives for participating in the program. She is also creating a painting to give to BCH as a symbol of her remorse.

In terms of a punishment for her crime, BCH does not believe that an incarceration sentence will serve Ms. Leavy, BCH, or the community. BCH submits that the real culpable individuals in this case are the four instigators who have orchestrated this disinformation campaign unabated for the past two years. As for Ms. Leavy, BCH believes that she has acknowledged her wrongdoing, and has taken steps to rectify it.

* * *

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this victim impact statement in this case.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Christopher Viney, JD
Executive Vice President and System General Counsel

cc:

Jared C. Dolan, Assistant United States Attorney
Forest O'Neill-Greenberg, Assistant Federal Public Defender