

HARRISBURG PATRIOT-NEWS
PA SILC LETTER TO THE EDITOR
Girl's growth-stunting raises ethical issues

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The decision by the doctors and parents of a six-year old girl in Seattle with a severe disability to use a radical medical treatment to keep her permanently child-sized is extremely disturbing and raises ethical questions for all humanity.

Doctors and Ashley's family concluded that removing her uterus and breast tissue and giving her large doses of estrogen to stunt her growth at 4'5" and 75 pounds is in her best interest.

For centuries decisions made by others in the best interests of a person with a disability have created disastrous consequences. Today, we are still working to stop the civil rights violations caused by actions taken with good intentions decades ago.

Ashley's situation is a disastrously slippery slope. The future implications for doctors and parents are horrendous. Ashley's parents obviously love her, but there will come a time when they can't care for her. This only puts off the inevitable.

It is even more troubling because the hospital's ethical committee approved the procedure. The severity of Ashley's disability doesn't empower others to treat her as less than human.

This case proves the critical need to invest in in-home services for people with disabilities. No parent would need to consider this radical medical procedure when the long waiting lists are replaced with expanded services that enable parents to be parents, not full-time medical care providers.

This is a societal problem that needs a societal solution, not a medical remedy to alter our children to fit into the system.

-- COREY L. ROWLEY, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council Harrisburg