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August 28, 2026

Dr. Kristen Mark, PhD, MPH
Director
Eli Coleman Institute for Sexual and Gender Health
1300 South 2nd Street, Suite 180
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Dear Dr. Mark:

The Committee on Education and Workforce (Committee) is concerned about whether federal taxpayer dollars were used to fund the development of paper transgender dolls with removable genitalia ("MyGender Dolls") and their use in therapy sessions with children as young as four years old, all under the authority of the University of Minnesota Medical School's Eli Coleman Institute for Sexual and Gender Health (Institute).¹

One news article states the use of these dolls began a few years ago as part of a research project at the University of Minnesota Medical School (Medical School) by two faculty members, Dr. Dianne Berg and Dr. G. Nic Rider.² Another article notes that the Medical School's Institute is where the research took place,³ and a third article suggests that a separate, related website, MyGenderDolls.com,⁴ is an outgrowth of the research and represents an implementation phase of the project.⁵

Whether the dolls are meant for elementary school and classroom deployment is unclear, but the website⁶ does provide images of several dolls and words underneath denoting "Doll Bases," "Expansion Packs," and "Training Materials"; purpose-related statements (e.g., "[a] new play-

¹ The College Fix, *UMinn Scholars Launching Transgender Doll Project for 4-year-olds* (July 10, 2026), <https://www.thecollegefix.com/uminn-scholars-launching-transgender-doll-project-for-4-year-olds/>.

² Fox News, *Transgender Dolls to Be Available for Minnesota Schoolchildren as Young as 4 Under Walz-Backed Program: Report* (July 25, 2026), <https://www.foxnews.com/us/transgender-dolls-available-minnesota-schoolchildren-young-4-under-walz-backed-program-report>.

³ *Supra* note 1.

⁴ MyGender Dolls, <https://mygenderdolls.com/>.

⁵ New York Post, *Taxpayer-funded Trans Dolls with Removable Genitalia to Hit Classrooms this Fall for Kids as Young as 4 to 'learn about different option'* (July 25, 2026), <https://nypost.com/2026/07/25/us-news/taxpayer-funded-transgender-dolls-to-hit-classrooms-this-fall/>.

⁶ The website's navigation tabs do not appear to be active; see MyGender Dolls, <https://mygenderdolls.com/>.

based therapeutic approach for trans and gender diverse children – and the clinicians who support them”; “a first-of-their-kind therapeutic play approach designed for gender diverse children ages 4-10”; “[b]uilt to help children tell their stories and see themselves represented, MyGender Dolls promote resilience, confidence, and joy through structured, engaging play”); and a description of potential end-users (e.g., “MyGender Dolls are built for the professionals who support trans and gender diverse children in clinical and educational settings. / * Mental Health Providers / * School Counselors & Educators / * Pediatricians and Allied Health Professionals”).⁷ The website also includes the following notice:

MyGender Dolls is launching.
Be among the first to know.
Whether you’re a clinician, educator, researcher, or supporter –
we’d love to have you in our corner. Express your interest and
we’ll be in touch.⁸

The notice is followed by a link to “Join the waitlist,” which takes users to a “MyGender Dolls Interest Form” requesting a wide range of information, including the respondent’s occupation (i.e., “Mental Health Provider: General,” “Mental Health Provider: Gender Specialist,” “Medical Provider: Pediatrician,” “Medical Provider: Gender Specialist,” “Elementary School Teacher,” and “Middle School Teacher”).⁹

The Institute’s 2024 annual report also includes a brief narrative describing the research project as a set of therapeutic tools for therapists to use in consultations with parents or caregivers to “help” children:

MYGENDER DOLLS: A TOOL FOR THERAPISTS

Several of our research and scholarship projects meld art and science. We have made substantial progress on the MyGender Dolls project, a set of therapeutic tools intended for licensed therapists to use with patients and their parents or caregivers, to help children who find it difficult to express themselves. Research and development is ongoing, and has been made possible by generous grant and donation support. We used community-engaged approaches to revise both the dolls and the therapeutic tools that are used in conjunction with them. We are working with offices at the University in order to bring this innovation to clinical spaces!¹⁰

This narrative raises several questions. First, it references the use of “community-engaged approaches to revise both the dolls and the therapeutic tools” but provides no details.¹¹ Second, the text references “generous grant and donation support” without providing further details on

⁷ MyGender Dolls, <https://mygenderdolls.com/>.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Eli Coleman Institute for Sexual and Gender Health: University of Minnesota, *2024 Annual Report* (2024), at 7, <https://med.umn.edu/sites/med.umn.edu/files/2025-01/2024%20Annual%20Report%20Online.pdf>.

¹¹ *Id.*

the categories or sources of funding, including whether any funding sources are federal. Third, the narrative states that the Institute or researchers it funds are working “to bring this innovation to clinical spaces,” and it is unclear whether such spaces include schools generally, school-based health clinics, school guidance counselor offices, or other locations.¹² Further, there appears to be no mention of the project in the more recent 2025 annual report.¹³

Given these questions and the Committee’s jurisdiction over *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA), including schoolwide programs,¹⁴ school based mental health services grants,¹⁵ mental health service professional demonstration grants,¹⁶ safe and healthy schools grants,¹⁷ and other school safety national activities grants,¹⁸ the Committee seeks specific information about the MyGender Dolls research project and any plans to implement the project in public elementary school settings. The Committee is concerned about whether funds received under any of these ESEA programs have been or will be used by district or school staff for deployment of the dolls.

The project may also raise concerns under *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) and Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA).¹⁹ These laws require any recipient of Department of Education funding to protect parent and student rights that might be implicated by the deployment of the MyGender Dolls.

Depending on the information received through the Committee’s investigation, legislative changes to ESEA, FERPA, or PPRA may be needed to better protect the rights of parents and students and to ensure that federal funding for mental health and school safety programs is not misused.

To help the Committee better understand the project and the extent to which it may seek to engage public elementary schools in Minnesota, please provide information responsive to the following requests (see enclosed instructions) no later than September 14, 2026.

1. For the period January 1, 2024, through the date of your response, provide a list of all federal funding sources that have, directly or indirectly, supported the development or implementation of the MyGender Dolls project. For each funding source, identify the specific grant or program name, the awarding agency, any applicable sub-agency, the amount awarded, and the duration of the award.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ Eli Coleman Institute for Sexual and Gender Health: University of Minnesota, *2025 Annual Report* (2025), https://med.umn.edu/sites/med.umn.edu/files/2026-02/2025%20Annual%20Report_Reduced.pdf.

¹⁴ 20 U.S.C. § 6314.

¹⁵ 20 U.S.C. § 7281.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ 20 U.S.C. § 7118.

¹⁸ 20 U.S.C. § 7281.

¹⁹ 20 U.S.C. § 1232g.

2. Provide copies of the grant awardees' applications associated with the MyGender Dolls project.
3. Provide copies of the notification letters or other written communications informing the applicants of the grant awards associated with the MyGender Dolls project.
4. For the period January 1, 2024, through the date of your response, provide all documents and communications between you, your staff, the Institute or its researchers, and any of the following individuals mentioning "MyGender Dolls" or otherwise alluding to the MyGender Dolls project:
 - a. Dr. Dianne Berg;
 - b. Dr. Nic G. Rider;
 - c. Any elementary school staff, including but not limited to:
 - i. school district superintendents;
 - ii. elementary school principals;
 - iii. elementary school nurses;
 - iv. elementary school mental health counselors;
 - v. elementary school social workers;
 - vi. elementary school clinicians; and
 - vii. elementary school guidance counselors; and
 - d. Staff at the Minnesota Department of Education.
5. Provide copies of all applications or other similar communications submitted by school districts, public schools, or school staff to participate in the MyGender Dolls project.
6. Provide documents sufficient to show sources of funding for school district, individual school, and school staff participation in the MyGender Dolls project, including a clear indication of any federal sources of funding.
7. Provide copies of any guidance provided to the Minnesota Department of Education, school districts, individual schools, or school staff regarding the need for participating entities to obtain parental consent for student participation in the MyGender Dolls project.
8. Provide documents and communications sufficient to show whether minor students participated in the development of the MyGender Dolls project, are participating in any ongoing part of the project, or will be in the future.

Congress's oversight powers are derived from the U.S. Constitution and have been repeatedly affirmed by the United States Supreme Court. Under House Rule X, the Committee's legislative and oversight jurisdiction is broad, extending to "education ... generally" and "laws, programs,

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and Government activities relating to domestic educational programs and institutions and programs of student assistance within the jurisdiction of other committees.”²⁰

Should you have any questions please contact Kent Talbert at kent.talbert@mail.house.gov or 202-225-4527.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tim Walberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tim" and last name "Walberg" clearly legible.

Tim Walberg

Chairman

Committee on Education and Workforce

cc: Dr. Carol Bradford, MD, MS FACS, Interim Dean, University of Minnesota Medical School

²⁰ RULES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 119th Cong. at 7, 10 (Jan. 16, 2025), <https://rules.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/rules.house.gov/files/documents/houserules119thupdated.pdf>.