

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

NICOLAS TALBOTT, ERICA VANDAL, KATE)
COLE, GORDON HERRERO, DANY)
DANRIDGE, JAMIE HASH, MIRIAM)
PERELSON, KODA NATURE, and CAEL)
NEARY,)

Plaintiffs,)

v.)

DONALD J. TRUMP, in his official capacity as)
President of the United States; the UNITED)
STATES OF AMERICA; PETER B. HEGSETH,)
in his official capacity as Secretary of Defense;)
MARK AVERILL, in his official capacity as)
Acting Secretary of the Army; the UNITED)
STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY;)
TERENCE EMMERT, in his official capacity as)
Acting Secretary of the Navy; the UNITED)
STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY;)
GARY ASHWORTH, in his official capacity as)
Acting Secretary of the Air Force; the UNITED)
STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE;)
TELITA CROSLAND, in her official capacity as)
Director of the Defense Health Agency; and the)
DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY,)

Defendants.)

Civil Action No. 1:25-cv-00240

DECLARATION OF MINERVA BETTIS

I, Minerva Bettis, declare as follows:

1. I am a Major, Rank O-4, in the U.S. Air Force on active duty, stationed at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada. I serve as an intelligence analyst and weapons officer. I am a transgender woman.

History of Service

2. I studied at the U.S. Air Force Academy beginning in 2010. I graduated from the Academy and started active duty as an officer in 2014. Throughout my career in the Air Force, I have been an intelligence analyst.

3. Throughout my career, I have been stationed in Alaska, Colorado, South Korea, Qatar, and Nevada. Since graduating from the USAF Weapons School in 2018, I have been a weapons officer. The joint force relies on weapons officers to be instructors, tacticians, and integrators. Since arriving at Nellis Air Force Base two and a half years ago, I have been instructing at the Weapons School. In my current position, I train others how to be weapons officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) so that they then become instructors in the field.
4. In my time in the service, I have received an Air and Space Achievement Medal, two Air and Space Commendation medals, and a Meritorious Service Medal. I was twice ranked first in Company Grade officer stratifications on my performance reports. Throughout my career, I typically ranked in the top third of performers.
5. I received a gender dysphoria diagnosis in August of 2022 and began to medically transition in 2023. I started hormone therapy in January of 2023.
6. My command has consistently been supportive of me and my transition. Although they have not always known how to talk to me about my being transgender, they have always tried to be respectful.
7. Part of my care plan is medically necessary facial feminization surgery (FFS). To me, this surgery is not only about feeling comfortable in my body. I also see it as important to my safety as a transgender woman. Transgender women like me are at risk of being targeted for violence and harassment because we are transgender. I have personally experienced such targeting and harassment. FFS will make it less likely that would-be harassers will perceive me to be a transgender woman and more likely that they will see me as a non-transgender woman. This is not an elective surgery that I think will be nice to have; it is a medically necessary treatment that is vital to my health and safety.
8. It took me nearly two years to get my FFS surgery scheduled. Several times, I had a referral appointment scheduled, but that appointment would be canceled.
9. I was able to get my FFS scheduled for January 13, 2025, at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego. Unfortunately, due to scheduling issues, my appointment needed to be moved to February 11. I asked that my appointment not be moved because I was worried about the potential impact of the incoming administration on my surgery. However, there was no way to keep my original scheduled appointment on January 13.

Impact of the Ban

10. On February 5, I received a phone call informing me that the Naval Medical Center was stopping all transition-related surgeries pending further guidance. I was told, in effect, that the hospital was preemptively complying with the Executive Order, even though no Department of Defense guidance on health care had yet been issued.
11. Two days later, defendant Secretary of Defense Hegseth issued his February 7, 2025, Guidance, which stated that “all unscheduled, scheduled, or planned medical procedures

associated with affirming or facilitating a gender transition for Service members are paused.”

12. Since then, I have reached out to my providers by phone and text, and have not received any response.
13. With my surgery cancelled, I have had to cancel flights and hotels. But more significantly, I have lost my chance to receive medically necessary surgery that I have waited over two years for.
14. This cancellation places an enormous medical burden on me as well. It devalues my service to this country by denying me medically necessary care solely because I am transgender.
15. I want to serve in the military and be recognized for my skill as an intelligence officer, instructor and leader. I want to receive the same benefits—including medical benefits—that are available to my non-transgender peers.

[REMAINDER OF PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK]

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Date: February 13, 2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Minerva Bettis", is written over a horizontal line.

Minerva Bettis