

**House Families, Aging and Human Services Committee**  
**Jessica Cicchinelli**  
**HB 454 Opponent Testimony**  
**November 16, 2022**

Chairwoman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Denson and Members of the Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Jessica Cicchinelli, I am a mom of three children and the Founder of Living with Change.

Decisions regarding the appropriate course of action for minors experiencing symptoms of gender dysphoria rightfully belong in the hands of parents rather than the state.

The Executive Committee of our State Board of Education believes this as well, as they stated in their Title IX Resolution approved on Monday.

“But mommy, I’m a girl”. I remember hearing my child say to me for the first time at the age of three. I didn’t think much of it at the time, and figured my child was going through a phase.

A few years later I was watching a morning news program when a segment about gender dysphoria came on. I stopped dead in my tracks, googled the term gender dysphoria and then called my husband with tears in my eyes. Did our child have gender dysphoria? Did this mean our child was transgender? I had never met anyone that was transgender, and I knew very little about what the term meant.

I learned that the suicide rate for those with gender dysphoria was 40%. It was in that moment that I vowed to myself that if this ended up being her journey, I would do whatever it took as a mother to make sure my child did not become a statistic.

House Bill 454, Save Adolescents from Experimentation (SAFE) Act, is a dangerous bill. This bill MUST be stopped.

As my husband and I were researching and trying to better understand our child, we found that Cincinnati Children’s Hospital had a Transgender Center. Since 2015 my child has been seeing multiple licensed medical professionals including a doctor specializing in adolescent medicine, an endocrinologist, a psychiatrist, a psychologist, and a social worker.

Before hormonal intervention was ever mentioned she saw a psychologist to ensure she was developing and growing socially, mentally, emotionally, and physically, just like any other child her age. Before she received hormone blockers, we were educated by doctors who specialize in endocrinology.

Looking back at her medical records, from the first time we saw a doctor in 2015, between office visits with doctors and therapy appointments, we have had more than 80 interactions with medical professionals, in addition to annual bloodwork and body scans.

We had over 80 medical interactions in 7 years - 80 medical decisions for my child, that we as her parents had the right to make.

This bill states “that individuals struggling with distress at identifying with their biological sex should be encouraged to seek mental healthcare services before undertaking any hormonal or surgical intervention.” I think it’s safe to say that 80 interactions with medical professionals over a 7-year period is proof that this is not something medical professionals take lightly.

This bill also states, “the use of cross-sex hormones comes with serious known risks.”

Hormones blockers and hormone affirmation medications are just like any other prescription that any one of us may take, there are always known risks, but does that stop you from taking your acid reflux medicine, or your blood pressure medicine? No, because for you these medications can be life changing, or lifesaving. For many trans youth that is exactly what hormone blockers and hormone affirmation medication is. Lifesaving.

My daughter is a 15-year-old happy, healthy, social young lady with lots of friends and confident in who she is. If she were not to have access to medical care, I know we would lose her. Years ago, before she transitioned, she was a sad, lonely, almost recluse child. It was hard to get her to come out of her room. I know that if she does not have access to doctors and medicine at this point in her life, at 15 years old, getting her to come out of her room will be the least of my worries. Making sure she has the will to live will be my biggest priority.

Children diagnosed with gender dysphoria are 6 times more likely to be depressed than their peers and more than 8 times as likely to commit suicide. So, why are you taking one of the most vulnerable populations and make it even harder for them to seek the support they need.

This bill states it is designed to “protect the health and safety of its citizen, especially vulnerable children” and “only a tiny percentage of the American population experiences distress at identifying with their biological sex.” This bill is doing the exact opposite of protecting vulnerable children by taking away a path to medical treatment.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak this morning.