

Chairwoman Susan Manchester, Vice Chair Al Cutrona, Ranking Member Sedrick Denson, and members of the Families, Aging and Human Services Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Megan Hodge. I stand before you a proud mother of a trans child. I am strongly opposed to HB 454.

I can't help but see the irony in this bill being called the SAFE act, when a quick google search will inform you that 52 percent of trans and non-binary children in 2020 contemplated taking their own short lives. A majority of those children were Black and Native. Why you're wondering? One of the main factors was the being targeted by politicians and bills just like HB 454. Trans youth having just one accepting adult in their life (parent, teacher, etc) will drop their chance of suicide by quite a large percent.

The first time my daughter told me she wanted to harm herself was when she was ten. She was struggling with depression, being bullied at school, and feeling hopeless. I couldn't begin to understand why my 10 year old who was so full of life was feeling so desperate. A few months later, she confided in me that she was in fact trans. I listened to her intently, and gently asked if she wanted to buy new clothes. A few days later in the car, I asked her if she wanted to change her name, she said yes, I want to be called Faith, that is my name. I asked if it was okay, if I chose her middle name, and on that bright sunny day I officially had a daughter, Faith Joesphine. Since then I've asked her on occasion, if she is still happy being Faith. She tells me "I'm not just happy being Faith Mom, I am Faith."

I am not asking you to understand, what being trans means to a child who has been brave enough to be their authentic self. I am not asking you to understand why I've allowed my 12 year old to transition. I am asking you, to trust me, as a mother. A mother who knows her child much better than you could ever know her. I am asking you to trust her doctors who've been by her side these last 2 years as we navigated this together. I am asking you, to allow Ohio parents to continue their suicide prevention by affirming their trans children.

I ask you to consider my testimony and actually keep trans kids safe by voting NO on this life threatening bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.