

Sara E. Williams, PhD
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May 29, 2022

Susan Manchester, Chair
Ohio House Families, Aging and Human Services Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
77 South High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairwoman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona and Ranking Member Denson,

My name is Dr. Sara Williams and I am a practicing Clinical Child Psychologist. I have over 20 years' experience in caring for patients and am currently licensed to practice in Ohio.

The Ohio General Assembly should leave the practice of medicine to licensed healthcare providers. I am gravely concerned that HB454 sets a dangerous precedent by interfering with medical decision making and parent/caregiver autonomy to discuss care options in consultation with their child's medical provider.

As I practice clinical psychology in a healthcare setting, I perform a thorough evaluation on each patient and make treatment recommendations based on the best available evidence for that individual's situation. In my experience, parents/caregivers do the best they can, often in difficult circumstances, to make decisions they believe are in their child's best interest.

HB454 would place healthcare professionals in an ethical dilemma: we would have to refrain from providing evidence-based care to patients struggling with a diagnosis of gender dysphoria or lose our license. **I cannot imagine another diagnosis where a state law would prohibit us from delivering evidence-based care.**

Research shows that youth with untreated gender dysphoria are at risk for multiple negative psychosocial outcomes, including disruption in mood, suicidality, substance use disorders, among others. **Passing HB454 will create an absolute mental and physical health crisis by limiting critical, life-saving, evidence-based care for these youth.**

In a time when the demand for child and adolescent mental health care is at its highest, HB454 makes the demand even higher. As a psychologist practicing in a Children's Hospital, I address patients' mental health concerns every day. I was trained to treat the whole child; ignoring a child's mental health or a diagnosis like gender dysphoria is simply not responsible care.

I implore you to vote no on HB454. **This bill sets a dangerous precedent and directly harms children.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sara Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sara E. Williams, Ph.D.
Licensed Clinical Child Psychologist (OH 7090),
Cincinnati Children's Hospital
Professor of Pediatrics,
University of Cincinnati College of Medicine