

Elizabeth Ireson, MD  
2818 Erie Avenue, Cincinnati OH, 45208

May 27, 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 Elizabeth Ireson, and I am a practicing pediatrician. I am currently licensed to provide care for children and adolescents 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 medicine, 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. Through shared decision making with their doctors, parents decide to treat their child's cancer with chemotherapy medications that cause vomiting, weight loss, hair loss, pain, and increased risk of infection. These are not easy decisions, but they are decisions that we, as physicians, are trained in having with our patients and their families.

HB454 would place medical 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 medical license. **I cannot imagine another diagnosis where a state law would prohibit us from delivering evidence-based care.**

Children and adolescents diagnosed with gender dysphoria need our support. Gender affirming care has been shown to improve health outcomes and reduce the risk of suicide. I have cared for several teenagers after suicide attempts associated with gender dysphoria and being forced to hide their true identity. One such patient shared – **"Why is it worth living if the laws say I don't exist?"**

In a time when the demand for child and adolescent mental health care is at its highest, HB454 makes the demand even higher. I address patients' mental health every day. At any given time, there are a dozen or more teenagers waiting in emergency departments to be admitted for psychiatric care. 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 will harm Ohio's children.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Ireson, MD