

Find Your Way Counseling & Consulting LLC

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Date: 6/1/22

RE: HB454

To: Chair Manchester

Vice-Chair Cutrona

Ranking Member Denson

Members of the Families, Aging & Human Services Committee

My name is Sarah World and I am a full-time private practice therapist and partner at Find Your Way Counseling & Consulting LLC. I have a Masters degree in Social Work from the University of Kentucky and am independently licensed with supervisory designation in the state of Ohio. I have a Master degree in Community and Public Health Education from the University of Cincinnati. I am also an Ohio resident. I began my private practice in 2019 and work largely with the LGBTQ population of all ages. I was employed full time at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC) from 2008-2019. I worked as a social worker in the transgender clinic at CCHMC from 2013-2019 where I assessed and evaluated ~1500 patients and their families who presented with gender identity concerns.

I am writing this testimony in opposition of HB454. Banning access to affirming and necessary mental health and medical care for transgender minors not only goes against medical advice, it also significantly and negatively impacts psychological outcomes for this population. As a licensed social worker who has worked directly with the transgender and gender non-conforming population for almost 10 years, I have significant experience in understanding Gender Dysphoria, co-morbid mental health diagnoses and helping my clients be well-adjusted, happy, healthy and safe individuals. When I meet with a client and their family, I perform a thorough evaluation 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. These parents and their child, along with their mental health provider and doctor should be able to make decisions about their healthcare.

Licensed and trained professionals, such as physicians, licensed therapists, clinical counselors and psychologists, etc., are equipped to follow standards of care guidelines, offer guidance and support for the LGBTQ population and make qualified and ethical decisions for readiness for affirming care for minors. Guidelines from the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), the

National Endocrine Society and the American Psychological Association, to name a few, exist to provide a blueprint for providing affirming care to transgender minors. 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.

HB454 would place mental health and 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.**

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. Trans youth who are persistent, consistent and insistent about their gender identity have positive psychosocial outcomes when they are able to live authentically in their mind and body, which is what affirming care helps them to do. My client population have high rates of depression and anxiety which are further exacerbated when not treated by affirming care and acceptance. 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah World', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sarah World MS, MSW, LISW-S

She/her/hers

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