

Minna Zelch  
22 Green Valley Dr.  
Chagrin Falls, OH 44022

May 27, 2022

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

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

I'm the parent of a transgender child and for over a year now our family has been fighting for our daughter's right to exist. The past two weeks have been exceedingly difficult as we have listened to witnesses who do not support transgender children. I ask that you not vote HB 454 out of committee without hearing testimony from parents who do support their children. My daughter has given me permission to share her story in hopes that it will demonstrate the importance of gender affirming care.

This is the story of a child who was practically born talking. At 8 years old this child started her own business giving educational shows about her reptiles to rooms full of people. She was also the first to speak up whenever she felt someone else was being treated unfairly. This child was proud of her voice and she knew how to use it.

In 4<sup>th</sup> grade our daughter joined a theatre program and quickly discovered that she loved to sing and perform. She wasn't headed for Broadway or anything, but theatre and singing became an essential part of her life. This was how she expressed herself, where she found friends, and how she relieved the everyday stress of school and life. Singing is what brought her joy, until the day it suddenly didn't.

Our daughter came out as transgender when she was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Her whole life she knew she was different than other people but she didn't really know why. My husband and I immediately found her a counselor to help her figure this out and started looking for other medical professionals. She wanted to start hormones right away but there was no way that was happening. We explained that she needed to live as a girl for several years before this was an option. We kept telling her we would discuss hormones when she was 16 or 17. We wanted her to be older and more certain about who she was.

Then we faced a problem. Puberty hit harder and faster than any of us expected. When our daughter's voice started changing her entire world came crashing down. She went from a confident, outgoing child to a depressed, anxiety riddled kid practically overnight. She dropped out of choir, quit her reptile business, gave up her beloved theatre, and refused to sing and often even speak because her voice did not match who she was inside. She lost her purpose,

her passion, her friends, and her sense of self-worth. It was like a switch was flipped and her light just went out.

We spent months unsuccessfully petitioning insurance for blockers until she was too far into puberty for them to do any good. Our only option became female hormones. This decision was agonizing and was one we arrived at as a family only after months of research, discussions with her medical team and our extended family, and countless sleepless nights. Every parent worries about whether they are making the right decisions for their kid. For parents of trans kids, or kids with any other medical condition or special need, that worry is ten-fold.

Today, we are 100% certain our family made the right choice. Our daughter knows she is transgender the same way our son knows he is left-handed. No one made them this way. No one put the ideas in their heads. It is just how they were born. Thanks to two years on female hormones and four years of care with an incredible medical team, our daughter's light is starting to flicker again. She is finally getting her confidence back. She is finally starting to see for herself what we have known all along, that her life has value and worth and that she is a human being deserving of love. Instead of thoughts taken over by hatred and self-loathing she is daring to visualize beauty. This was evident this past Christmas when she sang *Silent Night* as a solo in church while her little brother accompanied her. This was first time she sang in public in four long, heartbreaking years.

This is the power of gender affirming health care. Affirming health care has brought our daughter back to us. And, more importantly, it has brought her back to herself.

All transgender kids and their families deserve the basic right of deciding what medical care they receive. All parents of transgender kids deserve the right to receive information on every option so they can weigh the risks and benefits and chose what is best for their child. All transgender kids deserve access to care that brings them back to themselves.

I ask you to consider my daughter's story and vote no on this exceedingly harmful bill. Thank you for your time.