

Maria Barnes-Davis, MD/PhD

Cincinnati, OH 45223

June 2, 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,

I implore you to vote no on HB454.

I am a practicing pediatrician and neonatologist. I have over a decade of experience 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 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. **An example of this is when children with disorders of sexual differentiation (conditions where genitalia can be indeterminate or not clearly male or female) are born and admitted to the neonatal ICU.** Oftentimes, parents assign a gender to the child when the biological sex of the child is indeterminate or in conflict. Such children have high rates of gender dysphoria.

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.**

In a time when the demand for child and adolescent mental health care is at its highest, HB454 makes the demand even higher. 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.

Sincerely,

Maria Barnes-Davis, MD/PhD