



Cassandra Esposito, Ph.D.
9557 Cobblestone Walk, West Chester OH 45069

May 26, 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 Cassandra Esposito and I am a licensed practicing clinical psychologist at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. I am also the Director of Behavioral Health Programming for the Child Inpatient Psychiatry Program.

The Ohio General Assembly should leave the practice of medicine and psychological care 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 work in mental health for children and teens, in particular in inpatient psychiatric care, I see firsthand the impact of prejudice and discrimination on children who are experiencing gender dysphoria without the proper understanding and care. These children with untreated gender dysphoria are suffering so much that they seek to end their lives. The fact that we have evidence based interventions to help alleviate their pain and suffering is truly lifesaving. At Cincinnati Children's we have the Adolescent and Transition Medicine clinic, which provides evidenced based psychological and medical care for children with gender dysphoria. When we are able to connect these children and their families to this clinic we see significantly decrease rates in suicidality and re-hospitalization.

HB454 would place medical professionals in an ethical dilemma: they would have to refrain from providing evidence-based care to patients struggling with a diagnosis of gender dysphoria or lose their 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. According to a recent study, 86% of transgender you reported suicidality and 56% reported an actual suicide attempt. The biggest risk factors were related to school stigma, lack of family support, and internalized stigma. As mental health and medical care providers we have the opportunity and obligation to



alleviate the suffering and reduce the rates of suicide among these children by providing, not limiting, evidence based care.

I implore you to vote no on HB454. This bill sets a dangerous and deadly precedent.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C Esposito", is positioned above the typed name.

Cassandra Esposito, Ph.D.
Director of Behavioral Health Programming
Inpatient Child Program

