

Lauren Szulczewski, PsyD  
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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,

My name is Lauren Szulczewski and I am a practicing Clinical Psychologist. I have over 10 years of experience in 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 psychology, 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. I work specifically with children who are undergoing treatment for pediatric cancer. Families are often put in the impossible position of having to choose whether or not to put their child through an intensive regimen that *may or may not* save the child's life. From the outside perspective the decisions sometimes seem obvious, but it is always necessary for us to remember that no one loves the child more than their parents and they are doing their best in a difficult situation.

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. Despite gender dysphoria not being my primary specialty, I have worked with several pediatric cancer patients over the years who are also struggling with gender dysphoria. I feel a sense of relief that I have medical colleagues who I know are specialists in caring for these important human beings. Additionally, I have worked with parents who are struggling to understand and make the best choices for their children, but who ultimately want to make the best decision because at the end of the day their child's life is the most important thing to them and they are aware of the grim outcomes that too often result when a person's gender identity is disregarded. **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. There is clear evidence that youth suicide is exponentially, unacceptably, higher in this group of individuals when they are not accepted and cared for appropriately. 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 cursive script that reads "Lauren Szulczewski, PsyD". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Lauren Szulczewski, PsyD