

Michelle M. Ernst
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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 Michelle Ernst and I am a practicing clinical pediatric psychologist with 30 years' experience in caring for patients. I 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.

I am a Pediatric Psychologist in the Division of Behavioral Medicine and Clinical Psychology at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, and a Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. I carefully evaluate each patient I meet, 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 initiating inpatient treatment for a child who is significantly depressed and/or suicidal.

I address patients' mental health every day, providing outpatient care for youth with significant anxiety, depression and gender dysphoria. I am familiar with the extensive scientific research literature base supporting medical care as a critical means of addressing the mental and physical health risks of gender dysphoria; ignoring a child's mental health or a diagnosis like gender dysphoria is simply not responsible care.

HB454 would place health 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 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 implore you to vote no on HB454. This bill sets a dangerous precedent.

Sincerely,

Michelle M. Ernst, PhD