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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 Jilda Vargus-Adams and I am a practicing pediatrician. I have over 25 years' 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 pediatrics, I perform a thorough evaluation on each patient and make treatment recommendations based on the best available evidence for that individual and family'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 pursuing vaccinations to protect their child and community or accepting risk and side effects from medications that can address underlying illness.

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. This situation would create a level of dissonance that is fully untenable.**

In a time when the demand for child and adolescent mental health care is at its highest, HB454 makes the demand even higher. I address patients' mental health every day. We are routinely overwhelmed at our hospital when there are simply not enough beds to provide the needed support for children and teens who are suffering with mental health challenges. 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 and it is destructive to children, their families, and our community as a whole.

I implore you to vote no on HB454. This bill sets a dangerous precedent and would fundamentally alter the practice of medicine in Ohio and devastate many children and families.

Sincerely,

Jilda Vargus-Adams MD MSc