

To Committee Chair Susan Manchester, Vice Chair Al Cutrona, Ranking Member Sedrick Denson, and the members of the Ohio House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee:

My name is Julie. I am an Ohio resident and a parent of a transgender child. I am strongly opposed to HB454 (SAFE Act), which will cause direct harm to my child and my family. I would like to share some of our family's story.

My eldest child is eight years old and is funny, clever, kind, creative, and empathetic- all of the words parents love to use to describe their children. My child also loves to read. One of their favorite things to read is their age-appropriate collection of books about how our bodies work. These books have been a source of powerful knowledge and have been the starting point for wonderful conversations about how our bodies change as we grow up and grow old. One evening when they were six years old my child shared during one of these chats, "I don't want to have the boy puberty."

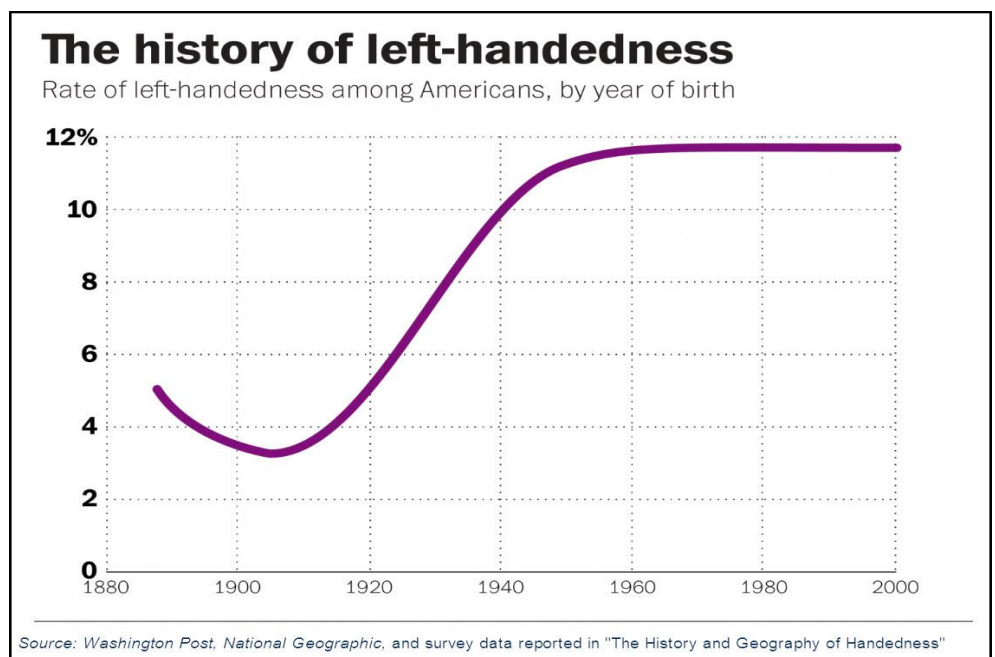
Our six year old had the knowledge, the awareness, and the words to express to us that the way they looked outside did not match the way they felt inside.

When your child tells you who they are, you listen.

Previous witnesses have testified before this committee that they are concerned about the rapid rate at which children are self-identifying as transgender. Some have called it an "epidemic." The reason for this is far more simple and far less sinister than many would have you believe. Today our kids have the words to describe how they are different from their peers, and the acceptance they find gives them the courage to share it.

Trans people have always existed. Trans kids have always been here. In the same way that the stigma of being left handed faded and the mid 20th century saw an explosion of left handedness¹ as the stigmas of being transgender fade we are seeing more and more people- especially young people- who feel safe enough to share who they really are. There are not more trans people than there were 20 years ago. There are more trans people who are telling us they are trans.

In the time since our child shared with us that they do not want to have a testosterone puberty, we have spoken to the care team at our amazing pediatrician's office. We've worked with their teacher, school staff, and school administration. The message from



¹ Graph Source: Washington Post

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/09/22/the-surprising-geography-of-american-left-handedness/>

these professionals has been consistent and clear: Listen to the child. Let the child tell you who they are. Follow the kid's lead.

As parents we are ultimately responsible for the care which our child receives or does not receive. When they reach an age where medical or pharmaceutical intervention is appropriate, we will make well-informed, private decisions as a family, in cooperation with our child's care team.

Supporters of this bill claim that it preserves freedom of parents and holds medical professionals accountable for unethical conduct, but it does neither. This bill strips medical professionals and parents of options that may be appropriate for their child based on the decision of a legislative body informed by witnesses who share screenshots of Facebook groups and Reddit posts as evidence to support their dubious claims that gender affirming care is inherently harmful.

Supporters of this bill also claim that it is not a "ban" on gender affirming care for minors because it does not "criminalize" it. While this may be the true intent of the legislation, applied in the real world it is an effective ban. If you threaten healthcare organizations and providers with "professional misconduct" and State Board disciplinary action or loss of funding for providing a particular type of care- as this bill does- that is the same as prohibiting it.

Every medication and every medical procedure has some inherent risk. The sponsors and proponents of this bill argue that when it comes to our kids there is no risk that is acceptable; for my child and many others like them, the risk of not using the tools available to help comes with a far higher risk. Instead of taking these tools away from medical professionals and parents we should be advocating for education and research to do a better job using them to help our kids and each other.

On behalf of my family, I thank you for your time.

Julie Gilman
Parent
South Euclid, Ohio