

Dear Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Denson, and members of the Committee,

My name is Dr. Anita Somani and I am an OBGYN practicing in Columbus, OH. I am writing in opposition of HB 454. I have been in practice in Columbus for 30 years and have slowly watched health care get eroded by politicians who don't consider evidence based medicine when creating bills. . Gender-affirming care is regarded as evidence-based practice by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and the American Psychiatric Association (APA). They have shown that LGBT youth experience anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation at a much higher rate than their cisgender peers. By denying patients this necessary care, physicians would be directly putting their lives at risk. Most adolescents recognize their sexual identity during adolescence.

This bill aims to deny gender-affirming care to youth based on the assumption that youth who need gender-affirming care will require invasive and irreversible procedures, which is not a true claim. Gender-affirming care is highly individualized and includes gender-affirming medical interventions which can be reversed, age-appropriate education about gender and sexuality, parental and family support, and social interventions. This allows patients to explore their identity without judgment and provides the option to dial up or back off treatment as they deem necessary.

Furthermore, patient autonomy should be honored in all situations, even if the decision does come to one involving invasive and/or irreversible procedures. These decisions should be made by the patient, their parents, and their healthcare provider, and not by a committee of lawmakers who are unfamiliar with each individual's specific situation.

This bill is termed the "Save Adolescents from Experimentation (SAFE) Act" when in reality, this bill has nothing to do with protecting children. Gender-affirming care is not experimentation at all; it is well-established and recommended care by numerous entities including the American Academy of Pediatricians. According to the Columbia University Dept. of Psychiatry, the ability of youth to receive affirming care such as puberty-delaying hormone therapy is associated with better mental health outcomes, improved functioning, and life satisfaction. For the safety and wellbeing of LGBT youth in Ohio, please reject HB 454.