

## **HB 454**

### **Opposition Testimony**

Dear Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Denson and members of the committee, my name is Tamara Melnick, I am from Stark County, and thank you for allowing me to present my testimony in opposition to HB 454 today. I come to you as a concerned parent of a teenager who has several transgender friends and acquaintances both at school and our church, kids whose happiness and future I have come to care for deeply.

Gender affirming care is important, lifesaving health care for transgender kids. This is agreed upon by all major medical professional associations, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American College of Physicians. In the unlikely event one of these children changes their mind, such care is easily reversed. But identifying as transgender is not a whim for these kids, it is a fact of their life that they have thought about deeply before telling anyone else. Providing them with gender affirming care improves their lives physically and mentally. Denying transgender kids access to gender affirming care leads to worse outcomes medically, academically, and socially. It is not the place of government to prevent evidence-based best practice medical care that harms no one.

Being transgender is not a phase that kids will grow out of. It is not a fad. This bill is cruel and inhumane. It would threaten some of our most vulnerable Ohioans, children who should be nurtured and protected so they can grow into the best people they can be.