

November 16, 2022

Chairwoman Susan Manchester
Families, Aging and Human Services Committee
Ohio House of Representatives

RE: Opponent to HB 454

Chairwoman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Denson and members of the committee: Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in opposition to HB 454.

My name is Devonne Czerwinski. I am from Delphos, Ohio. It's a small community of about 7000 people in Northwest Ohio. I am a mother of 5. 3 of my children were Assigned Male at Birth and 2 were Assigned Female at birth. Being a mother has been the highlight of my life. My children vary in age, from 26 years old to 6 years old.

I oppose HB 454 because one of my kids is transgender. My 17-year-old who was assigned female at birth told me when he was 3 years old that he was a boy. My husband and I brushed it off. Kids don't know what they're talking about at that age. Over the years, my son still continued to say he was a boy. When he started Kindergarten, we went school shopping and he refused to allow me to buy anything that was feminine or girly. No pink, no purple, no bows, hearts, glitter, your typical girl clothes. The day before he started Kindergarten, he wanted a short haircut. His father and I decided his short chin-length bob was short enough. Lance was not happy about that and found the scissors. He cut his hair to the scalp in several places and said "now you've got to cut it". We were left with no choice but to give him a short buzz cut. He was the happiest kid that day.

Fast forward to first grade. Lance was getting increasingly depressed and anxious. He expressed how he was a boy and not a girl. We got him in a pediatric psychiatrist in our area. Lance spent several months in therapy. His psychiatrist informed us that Lance had Gender dysphoria. As parents, we didn't know what that meant. He explained that Lance felt he was born in the wrong body. He treated Lance for his depression and anxiety brought on because of gender dysphoria until he left when Lance was 8.

We as a family struggled. My 8-year-old son was not your typical child. He struggled with his identity daily. He hated that he had girl parts on the outside but felt like a boy on the inside. What do you say to a child who thinks that God made a mistake? I know God didn't make a mistake, but I couldn't convince my young child that. Lance was mad, mad at me for making him like this.

We spent 2 years without a therapist until I heard of a gender clinic called THRIVE at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. My husband and I were excited for Lance. His first appointment was scheduled for November 12, 2015. We didn't know what was going to happen but we were hopeful we would get some answers. On that cold November day, My son was born. He told the provider he wanted to be called Lance and that he identified as a boy. From that day forward, he's been Lance and used he/him pronouns. We informed the school and they fully supported our son.

After several doctor's appointments with psychiatry, we finally got the diagnosis of gender dysphoria again. The physicians at Nationwide do not take this lightly. Transgender children go through several processes before they are diagnosed with gender dysphoria. Lance has and will continue to see these physicians throughout his treatment. My husband and I made the decision to treat Lance. Lance really struggled with puberty. He was terrified of the body changes that came with female puberty. He already had started to develop breasts. Because of this, we opted to start puberty blockers. This medicine was able to defer menstruation. We as parents discussed this treatment with his physicians. We were fully informed every step of the way. They told us about the side effects and long-term effects.

Lance is now 17. He started Testosterone at the age of 14 under the direction of his endocrinologist. He takes this medicine weekly and will need to for the rest of his life. We have discussed the side effects of taking this medicine extensively with him and his physicians. Lance enjoys having a deeper voice and believe it or not, he loves that he's hairy. His body now conforms to more of what he thinks it should look like to him. He still has a long way to go but he knows he'll get there.

We as parents make decisions for our children. We know what is best for them. We raise them to be the very best humans they can be. We don't need the government to make those decisions for us. We as parents give consent for the treatment. Gender dysphoria care is based on behavioral and mental health assessments given prior to treatment. No child is given puberty blockers or cross-sex hormones

without a complete and thorough mental health and behavior health assessment. We as parents want our children to live long happy lives identifying with who they truly are.

In conclusion, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony opposing HB 454. Please vote no. Allow transgender children to get the treatment they need to live the life they deserve.