

November 16, 2022

Re: Opposition Testimony for HB454

Dear Chairperson Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Denson, and members of the House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee:

My name is Denise McClenathan (she/her). I have worked as a scientist at a Fortune 500 company in Ohio for about 18 years. My husband and I live in Madeira, OH with our two kids, one of whom is transgender. I **oppose** HB454. This bill denies access to health care, removes safe spaces for trans youth, and violates their privacy.

Today our family is thriving, and our lives are filled with love and joy.

It wasn't always this way. There is a dark chapter in my oldest child's life. Around 4th grade, they started therapy. Although they previously excelled in school and had a rich friend group, they were struggling with assignments and having trouble with friends. Joy was gone. They were miserable. They stopped wanting to eat and started to harm themselves. They needed daily safety checks. They tried to end their life at 11 years old.

With their therapist, they slowly processed their feelings in a safe space. When they were ready, our child came out to us. We were referred to Cincinnati Children's Hospital for gender affirming care. They socially transitioned using a new name and pronouns at home and later, at school.

Today, our multidisciplinary support team consists of doctors, nurse practitioners, therapists, and counselors, who work together collaboratively in a thoughtful, considerate, and stepwise manner. My child's treatment addresses menstruation, disordered eating, depression, and anxiety. We have frequent appointments to monitor their physical and mental health, as well as their social and academic well-being. Throughout this journey, I have been extremely impressed with the professionalism and compassion of this team.

Today, my child is safe. They are confident. They are joyful. They belong.

Gender affirming care is complex and nuanced. My family's experience is nothing like the gross mischaracterization portrayed in proponent testimony.

I have imagined what the future looks like if this bill moves forward. Trans youth would be denied access to gender affirming care and outed to their parents. Their safe spaces would be gone, and they couldn't be themselves. In this future, my child's

joy and confidence slips away. When their well-being and health spirals, what options will our medical team have to help them. How long until they are back in a life-threatening crisis? This future is not only cruel but unsafe.

In that future, we would seek treatment outside of Ohio. My child would miss school. My husband and I would take off work. How will we sustain the same frequency of appointments and high level of care? Will we need to leave our home, our jobs, move away? What about other families that don't have this option?

I can also imagine a future where my child and my family continue to thrive. A future where we continue to have access to gender affirming care and work with our medical team to determine the best treatment plan for our child. One where therapy and school continue to be safe spaces for kids. A future where trans youth are supported in their homes, schools, and communities. That is the future I want for my child and all LGBTQ+ kids. That is the future they deserve.

What future would you want for your child? Your family?

That is the decision before you. This bill will NOT protect kids. This bill will harm trans youth and their families. Removing access to gender affirming care is the greatest threat to my child's safety and well-being.

I ask you to stand up to support transgender youth and **oppose** HB454.

Thank you for your time.

Denise McClenathan
Madeira, OH