

# YWCA IS ON A MISSION

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H.B. 454 – Opponent Testimony

Ohio House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee

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YWCA Columbus has served the central Ohio region for over 100 years, and our mission of eliminating racism, empowering women, and bringing peace, justice, freedom, and dignity to all guides our work in the women's rights and gender equity space. The YWCA Columbus sees our stake in women's issues as gender-expansive, and we strongly stand behind our partners in public health and political progress to support transgender and nonbinary youth. We oppose House Bill 454 on the grounds that it leaves behind our most marginalized, denies the medical reality of transgender youth, and is ultimately harmful to Ohio at large.

Our work is founded in understanding how systemic inequity is implicated in a variety of institutions, such as the housing market, healthcare, and education system. We also prioritize the experiences of the most marginalized, and in this case, the most disregarded in discussions around House Bill 454. LGBTQ+ youth are disproportionately affected by housing instability, with [over a fourth](#) experiencing homelessness at some point in their lives, and facing disproportionate negative health outcomes. The well-being of transgender and gender non-conforming youth is inextricably linked to the inclusivity and safety of their schools and stability of their housing situations; their safety must also be supported by healthcare systems. Without gender affirming medical care, queer youth do not just face harm at their own hands, but at the hands of other systems. Queer youth are much more likely to face homelessness, adding to the growing crisis around housing we are experiencing in Central Ohio. Queer unhoused youth face even higher rates of suicidality, mental health issues, hate crimes, and other negative outcomes. Often, queer youth in these situations are in them because they lack gender affirming and supportive household; therefore, medically affirming care is central to the wellbeing and safety of transgender youth. Gender affirming care allows transgender youth to overcome their gender dysphoria and ease into a more stable life.

We must not think of our neighbors, students, and children as customers—where access to and quality of care is determined by decision-making guided by a cost-benefit analysis. Gender-affirming care has shown [time and time again](#) to drastically improve the mental health outcomes for trans and gender non-conforming youth. Though gender-affirming care makes up a small margin of the services provided by the Ohio healthcare system, it is life-changing, and life-saving, to its beneficiaries. Access to gender-affirming care is an intervention that can save lives, mitigate the LGBTQ+ homelessness crisis, the queer mental health crisis, and other harm faced by transgender youth. Furthermore, the wide-reaching implications of denying public funding to hospitals for a small, albeit necessary, aspect of their overall care structure constitutes bad policy-making. Ohio's healthcare infrastructure will degrade, undermining the quality of already existing services, driving away current and future residents, reducing economic development, and ultimately, creating a system that all the more fails low-income, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+ people.

We at the YWCA Columbus seek to, above all, eliminate racism and empower women. Today, when we say “women,” we at YWCA Columbus know that we actually mean all women, and people who are gender marginalized. We believe that the inclusion of transwomen and transgirls is crucial to women's empowerment, and necessary to effectively fight the wide-reaching tentacles of gender oppression. We are not in the business of leaving anyone – especially the most marginalized – behind.

Our policies should reflect actions towards a more inclusive future—not greater barriers to gender-affirming care. We hope that the state legislature follows us in our vision of a better Ohio.

Thank you,  
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