

My name is Kyle Johnson, I am a cisgender gay man speaking in opposition to this bill. I am a second-year law student at Ohio State University Moritz College of Law and president of Moritz Outlaws. I will speak first for Outlaws, and then myself.

Outlaws is an LGBTQ+ affinity group at OSU law school. We are a group of young law students who are appearing before this committee today to assert with the full faith and confidence of our membership: this bill is inaccurate, ineffective, and hateful. It will not stop transgenderism, it will only make being transgender more dangerous than it already is, and only serves to inflict pain on Ohio children.

First, HB454 is inaccurate. These "experimental" treatments, as the bill calls them, are not experimental at all and many of these types of treatments, including "genital gender reassignment surgery" are routine to both queer and cisgender patients alike. These procedures, even on minors, are a standard medical practice, and have been performed safely and effectively for years. One article¹ in the Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy found in a follow-up survey that those who underwent genital reassignment surgery reported 94% satisfaction. All of the study's over 200 participants reported minimal medical complications over the 6 years of the study across all forms of gender-affirming care, including those whom had undergone surgery. In fact, these treatments like hormone blockers are used for cisgender patients with hormonal or genetic anomalies in regular practice often. In the safety and sterility of a hospital, surrounded by healthcare professionals interested and trained in the most effective care possible, none of these treatments are experimental for anyone for any reason. We understand that calling this bill the SAFE act is snappy and politically expedient, but there is no Doctor Mengele hiding in Ohio. These are not mutants and there are no experiments here; they are just children, trying to live life, with more poise and intelligence than this bill expects of them.

Second, HB 454 is ineffective. Much like gun control and abortion, these measures will not stop Ohio citizens from receiving their gender-affirming care, only from receiving such care in a safe, caring, and regulated environment. The demand for these procedures will not go away if they are outlawed, only the protection that government regulation can afford them. Put bluntly in a 2016 article from the ACLU of Ohio "transgender people have always existed"². In Ohio and across the nation, demand for gender-affirming services is inelastic. Ohio's transgender history is rich and unflinching. Gender-non-conforming cultural and social practices existed in Ohio among the Native American tribes including the Shawnee people that occupied most of central and southern Ohio prior to Northeast Expansion³, and they will continue to exist long after the paper upon which this bad bill is written has crumbled to dust. Back alley gender-affirming care services are not a desired outcome by any party in this matter, and yet they will be the primary effect of this proposed legislation if adopted.

Finally, HB454 is hateful. We strongly urge this committee to direct its attention to Governor Spencer Cox, the current Republican Governor of Utah, in this matter. When Governor Cox was presented with a similar anti-trans bill, one that targeted Utah's transgender children, he urged his legislature to look inward. The truth is that transgender children are a small minority of a small minority, Even within the LGBTQ+ community, transgender people are the minority, especially those that transition as minors. There are so few people targeted by HB454, it is hard to read the bill as anything but a deeply spiteful repudiation of a few Ohio

¹https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316690679_Surgical_Satisfaction_Quality_of_Life_and_The_Ir_Association_After_Gender_Affirming_Surgery_A_Follow-up_Study

²<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/transgender-people-have-always-existed>

³<https://queercafe.net/twospirit.htm> ; <https://www.advocate.com/commentary/2021/11/26/Saving-two-spirit-and-indigenous-lgbtq-youth>

children, whom the legislature has deemed too brainwashed or too dumb to make their own choices. As put by Governor Cox, "Never has so much hate been directed at so few." Today, we law students crib from our criminal law 101 and respectfully ask each and every member of this committee and this legislature at large: if you have any reasonable doubt, which you should in this case, please vote No on HB454. We beg you to follow Governor Cox's lead on this matter, and ask you as he asked his legislature, "to err on the side of kindness, mercy, and compassion."

However, as much as Outlaws knows this bill to be inaccurate, ineffective, and hateful; I am aware that our ability to change minds as Outlaws is limited. Bills derived from emotion like HB454 cannot be defeated completely with facts and logic. As such, I appear before you today not just as OSU Outlaws President, but as Myself. My name is Kyle Johnson, and I would like to present my story as evidence against this bill, too.

I was so scared when I came out to my dad, much more than my mom. He's a conservative, and I am sure he would describe himself as "a man's man". He drives a pickup truck, never misses a football game, little league or NFL, and he listens to country music on a yellow, battery-powered Dewalt radio when he woodworks in our garage. He also voted for trump both times; obviously, voting is secret but he is pretty open about doing so. Not thrilled about that, but you can't choose your family, so what can you do? I thought for most of my life that he would not be welcoming to a homosexual in his house. So when I sat him down in our living room one day and told him, I was Gay, it was tense. I would like to say it was the scariest moment of my life, but it wasn't. The truth that no anti-trans activist will tell you, a truth that I, a cisgender man, have always known, is that children are not as stupid or as naive as we perceive. A child in that moment can tell from the look on a parent's face before a parent even opens their mouth, whether or not their love is truly unconditional. Right then and there; the relationship lives or dies in that exact moment. There is nothing else to say.

Indeed, a lot goes through a child's head when they come out, but I have to imagine that even more goes through a parent's. After a while, a dreadful while of total silence, he looked at me, and he spoke. He, of course, had his questions. Everyone does. "Was I sure?", "Did I realize how hard it would be?", "Did I know what I was getting into?". Then he reassured me. "It was going to be okay", "you'll always be my son", But I already knew I was going to be okay. I knew before he opened his mouth. And of course, I said yes, I was sure, and I knew what I was doing, and I did; don't know if he believed me, but it didn't matter. The conversation was over before he said a word. I am so, so lucky to have my father.

Queerness is a risk every queer child takes, and the consequences of such risks are felt this time of year especially. As president of Ohio State Outlaws, I would like to think I have taken special steps to ensure our members feel loved and wanted this time of year. Monday, Outlaws is hosting a small celebration we are holding in one of the classrooms we call Friendsgiving. A lot of my people, my fellow law students even, do not have family with support in their eyes, that makes them feel wanted and loved.

No child is stupid, you know. There is no child dumb enough to come out as LGBTQ because they think it might make them popular. And there is no boogiemanager, hiding in your child's closet, telling them this life is risk-free: a cool fad like being transgender is the new beanie babies.

⁴<https://governor.utah.gov/2022/03/24/gov-cox-why-im-vetoing-hb11/>

My father is a great man, but I am aware that there are other men who are not so great. I talk to the survivors of those men every day as Outlaws President. I pray you do not leave children in the hands of lesser men. It is because of this I am before you today, telling you that HB454 is repugnant, and this is not the state's pie to stick their hands in.

In closing, and in the spirit of kindness, mercy, and compassion evoked by Governor Cox and ourselves, I invite any member of this committee to call me up with any questions you might have. If you would like to know me, you certainly can, and if you would like to learn, I can certainly teach you. I have given my number to this committee as a prerequisite to speak today, and I hope it will be available if you have any questions on this bill at all. I am always

Happy Thanksgiving.

⁴<https://governor.utah.gov/2022/03/24/gov-cox-why-im-vetoing-hb11/>