

11/14/22

To: Ohio House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee

Re: HB 454

To the committee:

Thank you for hearing my testimony. I am a resident in Columbus and a Columbus City Schools parent, as well as an educator (a faculty member at the Ohio State University). I am writing about the proposed "Save Adolescents from Experimentation" Act. HB 454, if passed, would entail great harm to Ohio children. I urge you not to support it.

I have one son in middle school and another in high school. My sons' ages make me keenly aware of the difficulties that kids have in feeling accepted. I watch them and their peers as they struggle to figure out who they are and how they fit into the world. I understand that HB 454's supposed purpose is to protect children's wellbeing. However, in fact, the bill works directly against their wellbeing. As numerous studies have shown, when trans kids are forced to be ashamed or frightened about who they are—including when they lack gender-affirming care—they are extremely vulnerable to mental-health problems, including suicidal thoughts. Why would we want to pass a law with proven dangerous consequences?

I speak as a parent; I also speak as someone who works in higher education. Please consider the grave long-term consequences of this legislation for Ohio kids as they age into their college and job-seeking years. In the past few years, at all levels of education, students are struggling with mental-health concerns. I see this firsthand all the time in my classes. Students with anxiety, depression, and related disabilities are having trouble focusing and completing their coursework, or even attending class regularly. Many are in danger of dropping out. Again, it cannot be overstated how harmful hostility to LGBTQ children can be to their mental health. This bill sets a path whose damage would be felt in schools at all levels. It would impede the future of Ohio citizens as they pursue college and, in turn, successful job futures. Please consider what you would be putting in place by telling Ohio's LGBTQ youth that an entire system stands against them.

Thank you for your time.

Jill Galvan