

Good morning, Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Denson, and Members of the Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 454.

My parents moved my brother and me to Ohio from California when we were young. I was four-and-a-half. My brother seven-and-a-half. I didn't know what Ohio would be like, but I did know I was leaving everything I was familiar with behind: the ocean, the sea lions, the morning fog, and most importantly, my grandparents. I didn't understand why we had to leave. I didn't see the countless hours my parents agonized over making that decision to leave. I didn't see the nights they stayed up pouring over the data they compiled; carefully measuring how each decision would impact our family for years to come. They outlined what each community had to offer; painstakingly comparing that to what we, their children, needed at the time and what we may need in the future. They had gathered statistics and facts about the possible places they could move our family to. But they didn't have a crystal ball. They didn't know for sure which path to take, they were guaranteed no certain outcome. After a long, thoughtful period of time, they made a decision. They made the best decision they could at the time based on the information they had. They didn't know how the story would end. But they knew the story would be different, likely much better, than the one that was unfolding for us in real time in California. So they left their jobs, their friends, and their parents. Together, said our goodbyes, packed up everything, shipped all of our possessions, and loaded ourselves in the station wagon with our dogs and guinea pigs to head to the great state of Ohio, where opportunities for my brother and I awaited.

Fast forward my story about 20 years. Through elementary school. And middle school. Through my first job. And high school, then through college. Then marriage. When my husband and I were deciding where to put down roots, I thought back to all of the many things that my parents shared that this great state held for me and my family. I thought back through all the ways that their willingness to follow the facts, weigh the options, and mitigate risk created a life that supported and sustained me. For all of their reasons, and more, we decided to stay in Ohio.

Fast forward again. This time 10 years to a cold January morning when we first learned I was pregnant. Being pregnant changed our world. We were no longer

solely focused on what we needed. Now, like my parents before me, I was consumed with thoughts about what this child may need and all the many, many decisions that I would likely face on their behalf as a parent. I, too, when faced with decisions, would gather information and pour over the data, carefully measuring how each decision would impact my child for years to come. I, too, would outline what each choice had to offer; painstakingly comparing that to what my child needed at the time and what they might need in the future, I would make the best decision I could at the time based on the information I had. Without a crystal ball. Without a guarantee.

Though I don't know you personally, if you are a parent, I would guess you have faced similar decisions. You have gathered information and poured over data, carefully measuring how each decision would impact your children. And you made the best decision you could at the time based on the information you had. I am guessing that our stories, while having their own unique features, also have many similarities. I'm guessing that it was easy for you to imagine yourself in my shoes. And if that's the case, I hope it won't be hard for you to imagine yourself in my shoes now, in a place I never imagined I would be.

Fast forward 8 years to a cold January day when my child first told me, "I am a girl." Not "I wanna be a girl." Not "I think I am a girl." But a declaration: "I am a girl." And as life often does, it changed in a moment. I knew nothing about what it meant to have a transgender child, but I did what my parents taught me to do. I gathered the information, I poured over the data, and I set out to make the best decisions I could.

Our journey has been nothing like what I heard described by the people who gave proponent testimony earlier this year. We started by talking to a pediatrician, then a therapist, then, almost half a year later, we had our first appointment with the THRIVE clinic at Nationwide Children's Hospital. We were not offered blockers at our first appointment, nor were we told to start her on estrogen right away. We did not have anyone talk to us about gender affirming surgery. Or ask us if "we'd rather have a living daughter or a dead son." We were not told what we had to do, we were offered recommendations. We were not coerced into quick decisions. We were given a team of professionals to take this journey with. Our team consists of a social worker, a therapist, a psychiatrist, and an endocrinologist all assigned to work with us. We have been given information,

as we needed, to make the best decisions we can for our child. We have had candid conversations and open discussions where we wrestled with the data; where we were encouraged to ask questions, to push back, to get second opinions if we needed. We have been partnering with our team of medical experts for over five-and-a-half years, and we trust them.

We do not take our responsibility as parents lightly. I am here today to ask you not to strip away our rights as parents to make important healthcare decisions for our children based on misinformation and fear. Ohioans deserve to be able to make the best decisions for our children that we can, just as my parents did with me.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.