

Madame Chairwoman Manchester and members of the committee,

Thank you for letting me provide this testimony to voice my strong opposition to HB 454, an unconscionable bill to forcibly detransition the trans youth of Ohio. I understand time is brief, and there are many others who can provide even better personal testimony, so I will attempt to keep it somewhat brief. I am compelled to speak out against this bill today as a concerned citizen because I think no good Ohioan should let this outrageous bill slip by without forceful opposition.

I watched several of the previous hearings for this bill, and I was deeply disturbed by the testimony I heard. Conservative activist groups were brought in to support this bill masquerading as some sort of neutral advocacy org, or worse, pretending to be a representative medical organization. This is particularly disturbing, given that every major medical organization in fact vocally supports transition care for trans youth. There was even one parent who chose to isolate her child from friends, support, and proper medical care in a desperate attempt to make them cis. I understand that your child coming out as trans could be concerning and even take time to learn to understand but, if I may quote a pastor speaking on trans rights, "Reasonable people should be concerned with any approach that is based on intimidation, fear, manipulation, and isolation rather than education, information and patience." We should not be using intimidation, fear, manipulation, and isolation on children in a futile attempt to prevent them from being trans. Instead, we must educate ourselves and be patient in learning to understand their experience. Members, I hope you will instead listen to the many qualified people providing testimony in opposition to this bill, such as the several hospitals who testified, some who donated thousands to the Friends of Manchester campaign through the Friends of Ohio Hospitals PAC. I assure you these professionals represent the true consensus of the medical community on caring for trans kids.

But again, I understand parents are scared, a lot of people until recently had hardly even heard of trans people and some people are becoming nervous that more and more people today are identifying as transgender. This bill's sponsor, in his testimony, even admitted to not being well informed on the issue and having to do research to understand the issue better. Unfortunately, he seems to have been misled. But it can be scary, I get it. Sadly, trans people are exposed to increased rates of discrimination and harassment. On top of that, when you see

the trans experience portrayed in media it's generally described as this awful affliction, only described in terms of unbearable gender dysphoria and suicidality. But that's just not the full story. Yes, many trans people do experience dysphoria, but many trans people will also experience euphoria as well, when allowed to live their true selves. This bill would completely rob that source of joy from Ohio's trans youth. Until you see the absolute joy of a trans friend or loved one finally being able to access proper care, you have no business attempting to ban it. I've seen dear friends finally able to experience joy, finally finding a life worth living for, when they were able to access gender affirming care. Wait and see policies are simply unacceptable, just as detransitioners experience regret from their time on the wrong hormones, so do trans people forced to go through an entire wrong puberty, creating lasting effects that can be at best costly to undo, and at worst permanent. Being trans can be joyous, you cannot not rob that from Ohio's youth. Banning all trans kids from all transition care out of fear that some extremely small number of cis children may transition and regret it is effectively saying the lives of trans children are less valuable than that of their cis peers, that's just wrong.

Moving on, unlike many of the supports of the bill that flew in, I am from Ohio, I grew up in Cincinnati, and I went to college here in Columbus, I've lived in Ohio my whole life. But it's no secret many young people are not interested in staying in Ohio with its current trajectory. Ohio was one of 17 states to decrease in population last year, according to Pew. Young people do not want to plant roots and raise a family in a state where human rights are under attack and up for debate. Where if you have a child who happens to be trans, and you, their doctors, and your child are all in agreement that transitioning is the best path for them, you will not be able to provide your child with that critical treatment. Ohio is competing with every other state to maintain population and educated talent, we don't need pointlessly cruel bills like this dragging us down. This bill is toxic and simply wrong for Ohio.

But much more importantly, what of the primary victims of this bill, the trans kids and their families, what will happen to them? It's important we talk about them, these families will be closely watching the hearings for this bill, frankly terrified about what you may decide to do. They're having to plan for potentially fleeing the state if this bill passes. I don't know about you, but if I were a parent, I would choose continuing to provide my child with critical gender affirming care over

remaining in Ohio. Just imagine that, creating a needless refugee situation from Ohio. Members, the only people who should be fleeing Ohio is the Michigan Wolverines after they get thoroughly defeated by Ohio State next Saturday. This is patently ridiculous, and you can prevent this tragedy by killing this bill in committee.

So, I want to conclude by saying whatever you do with this bill, please keep those families in mind. Think of those scared Ohio families, and those terrified Ohio trans kids as you decide what to do with this bill, because they're who you'll be hurting, they're who you'll be saying are no longer welcome in the state of Ohio. And to those families I would say, no matter what happens with this bill, you should know there are Ohioans out here fighting for you, we are paying attention, this bill will not slide through unnoticed and without a fight. And if it comes to it, God forbid, there will be charities working to help provide aid for you to flee to a safe state. Chair Manchester, I am calling on you to kill this cruel bill, do the right thing and refuse to let it advance out of committee.

Thank you for your time and sincere consideration.

Michael Hayworth

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### **Links**

<https://www.transparencyusa.org/oh/pac/friends-of-ohio-hospitals-1508-pac>

<https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2022/04/26/pew-ohio-one-of-17-states-to-shrink-in-population-last-year/>

[https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w30088/w30088.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w30088/w30088.pdf)