

Hello, my name is Shivani Deshpande, and I am providing testimony **in opposition** to House Bill 454 as an Ohioan and as a future physician.

As a medical student, I've seen first-hand how our health system is struggling to bear the weight of a mental health crisis among our youth – the lack of service availability has left many families waiting months to get care. I am particularly concerned about youth who identify as trans/gender-nonconforming. This group experiences more emotional distress and depression, bullying, and suicidal attempts than other youths.

Given the unique challenges faced by trans/gnc youth, it is pertinent that we find ways to bolster the health and well-being of this group. Every child deserves access to the treatments and resources that they need to thrive; and every family should be equipped with the knowledge and support necessary to get them there. **Therefore, it is crucial that youth with gender dysphoria receive appropriate assessments and access to *all* the treatments that they and their care teams know are in their best long-term interest, including the medical interventions that HB 454 seeks to ban.**

HB 454 seeks to restrict evidence-based health care for young people while inserting legislators into the relationship between minor, their guardians, and their medical providers in an unprecedented manner. I am concerned about the message this bill sends about Ohio's dedicated healthcare providers, the impact it will have on our ability to provide the best care possible to our communities, and its potential impact on our healthcare workforce:

1. The language of this bill implies that medical treatment for gender dysphoria is being provided in an unsafe, experimental manner and it implies that health providers are not doing their due diligence of evaluating the myriad of factors which impact youth who experience gender dysphoria. This is not true. Gender affirming care is safe, holistic, and decreases depression and harmful behavior.
2. This bill will force Ohio's providers to decide between violating their ethical duty to provide the best care possible to patients or lose their license. Myself and my colleagues are concerned about practicing in an Ohio where this is the reality. If this bill passes, many of us will be incentivized to establish our practice elsewhere. Amidst an epidemic of youth mental health concerns, along with our state's abysmal infant/maternal mortality rates and addiction crisis, this committee should be prioritizing efforts to keep Ohio's physicians in this state.

I grew up in Ohio, and as someone who may have children one day, I always imagined I would raise them here. This bill brings Ohio's culture into question. I want to live somewhere where all children are loved and accepted for who they are, and who have access to the resources they need to thrive. I strongly urge you to vote against this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you,

Shivani Deshpande
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References:

1. <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/what-gender-affirming-care-your-questions-answered>