

To: Members of the Ohio House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee

Fr: Monica Hueckel, Vice President Advocacy, Ohio State Medical Association

Da: November 16, 2022

Re: HB 454

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On behalf of the Ohio State Medical Association (OSMA), the state's oldest and largest professional organization representing Ohio physicians, medical residents, and medical students, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony regarding our opposition to House Bill 454, which would prohibit medical professionals in Ohio from providing gender-affirming care to minors.

OSMA supports individualized, gender-affirming, evidence-based treatment and clinical practices in caring for transgender and gender minority patients. Youth who identify as transgender are a historically underserved patient population and are increasingly presenting to pediatric offices for care, referrals, and resources. Ohio's children have the best chance to thrive when they are supported and can get the health care they need, and transgender children are no exception. We are concerned that by denying transgender youth evidence-based, best practice medical care, HB 454 creates a hostile environment for young people and their families - as well as for the healthcare professionals from whom they seek guidance and care.

Criminalizing or penalizing necessary medical care denies physicians the freedom to practice medicine informed by their years of education, training, clinical experience, as well as the available scientific evidence and research. The physician-patient relationship cannot thrive if both parties are prevented from collaborating and making decisions together about the care that is best for them. Interfering with and damaging this relationship is a risk to patient safety and can lead to negative health outcomes.

Additionally, placing such restrictions on the practice of medicine in statute could have a negative impact on Ohio's ability to recruit and retain physicians and other medical professionals. Physicians and other healthcare workers may hesitate to live and work in a state that discriminates against specific patient populations and prohibits utilization of best practices in their care.

OSMA recognizes the unique health care needs of LGBTQ patients, and advocates for equal rights protections to all patient populations, including protection from discriminatory practices. We are dedicated to assuring that health care is fully inclusive and attainable, so that everyone has access to necessary medical services regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other defining characteristic.

Thank you for your consideration of our remarks. As always, we appreciate the opportunity to be meaningful contributors to the legislative process. Please contact us should you have any questions.