



Cleveland Clinic Children's

House Bill 454 – Opponent Testimony
House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee
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Chairwoman Manchester, Vice Chairman Cutrona, Ranking Member Denson, and members of the Ohio House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide opponent testimony for House Bill 454, which would prohibit healthcare professionals from providing gender affirming care for minors in Ohio. My name is Dr. Vanessa K. Jensen, and I am a clinical and pediatric psychologist as well as a board certified clinical child & adolescent psychologist on medical staff at Cleveland Clinic Children's. Additionally, I am the founder and primary pediatric psychologist for a program at Cleveland Clinic called GUIDE, which stands for **G**ender **U**nderstanding, **I**dentify and **E**xpression.

The Cleveland Clinic Children's GUIDE Program includes a group of healthcare providers, including psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, pediatricians, adolescent medicine specialists, endocrinologists, and bioethicists, all who are experienced in the care of youth with gender differences. Numerous clinical, ethical, legal, and social complexities contribute to decision-making challenges as staff partner in every case with parents in caring for young transgender and gender-diverse patients. As clinicians and ethicists collaborating in a multidisciplinary pediatric transgender care program, we work to provide gender-affirming care to children and adolescents (in some cases, addressing gender-related questions initiated by parents of young children) in the context of their family and community. Our primary goal is to provide the best possible information to patients and families regarding options, risks, and benefits of various treatments.

The GUIDE Program provides an array of age-appropriate healthcare services. All care is individualized to meet the needs of each unique situation, complying with the standards and best practices for this population, as established by the American Psychological Association, American Psychiatric Association, Pediatric Endocrine Society, Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH). Services may include: pediatric providers with understanding of the issues of transgender youth; psychological and psychiatric services offered by mental health providers, specialized assessment related to referral for hormone consultation/treatment (when deemed appropriate and consistent with national and international best practice guidelines), support and education for youth and families regarding gender issues and challenges, and specialty care with pediatric endocrinology and adolescent medicine regarding use of medications in gender affirmation therapy. We do not perform surgeries on minors (any person younger than age 18) for the condition of gender dysphoria.

Many gender-diverse youth experience a high level of emotional distress about their bodies called gender dysphoria.

House Bill 454 would eliminate our ability to provide these services to a population requesting and in need of specialized care. We strongly recommend the committee not penalize clinicians who are following national standards of care to support patients.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 454