

## **Stephanie McElrath**

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee, thank you for this opportunity to voice my opposition to House Bill 454. This dangerous legislation is the opposite of safe and targets an already vulnerable group of Ohio youth by denying them access to life saving affirming medical care and revoking funding to hospitals who provide it. This bill would also threaten the safety of students in schools by forcing school guidance counselors and staff to abide by new rules that would be in direct conflict with the ethical guidance of their fields as well as title IV.

I'm a mental health counselor who has worked with dozens of trans kids over the last three years, and I implore you to please vote no on HB454. Trans kids who are considering gender affirming surgeries are going through gender dysphoria and pain that you and I could not imagine. These kids need support, understanding, and education about their options, not shut down entirely. This could result in catastrophic reactions from trans youth who feel their only option is death by suicide. Please consider this from a mental health professional who has seen these thoughts and fears firsthand in her office.

I urge you to oppose HB 454 and protect our state's youth.