

## **Paterson Gauntner**

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.

My name is Paterson Gauntner. I am a person of faith, trans, a parent of two young kids, and an Ohioan who cares deeply about the children and young adults in this state. I am strongly opposed to House Bill 454, preventing transgender youth from receiving proper medical care.

All my life growing up I was uncomfortable with the gender assigned to me at birth. Going through puberty increased these negative feelings, and I was depressed and sometimes suicidal in high school. It wasn't until I came to terms with my queer identity and found a church that was affirming of that identity that I began to feel whole, and love myself for who I am. The gender affirming medical care I have been able to receive since coming to terms with my trans identity has been life-changing. It's hard to overstate just how much loving the body that I'm in has changed my quality of life. I got top surgery in 2017 and every day since then, I've looked in the mirror and felt joy. I'm able to love God, love my family, and love my community as my whole self. Trans people are people. We know what our bodies need. Doctors can help us get the care that's right. Legislators shouldn't decide what's right for my body, the bodies of trans youth, or the bodies of my kids. That should be left up to those individuals and the doctors who care for them. The risks of denying trans kids appropriate medical care are high, and the actions you take as legislators can have a huge impact on the mental health and well-being of kids who are just as vulnerable as I was when I was young.

I urge you to oppose House Bill 454 and leave decisions about the medical care of trans people up to us and our doctors. Thank you for your time and your careful consideration of this issue.