

Anita Dacanay

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 Anita Dacanay, M.Ed., LPC. I am a mental health counselor in the greater Cleveland area, and approximately 45% of my caseload is composed of people who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. I am strongly opposed to House Bill 454, preventing transgender youth from receiving proper medical care. Statistics show that transgender youth are at high risk in our population not simply because they identify as trans, but because as such they are subjected to higher rates of prejudice, abuse, trauma, and exploitation. I am particularly concerned about section 3129.05. of this bill, as it would potentially require me to break my professional code of ethics in order to comply with the proposed law. While I would encourage a client who was a minor to disclose their identity to their parent if they wanted to do so and if it were reasonable to assume that the parent/guardian would be supportive; I would not encourage that client to do so if they feared negative retribution (such as abuse or abandonment) or if they asked me not to disclose this fact. My reasoning is that I am bound to serve what I believe is for the good of my client. If I knew that such a disclosure would result in harm to my client, disclosing to the parent would be acting outside of the American Counseling Association's guiding principles of autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, justice, fidelity and veracity. The WPATH Standards of Care were adopted to present clear guidelines to professionals around deeming when a particular gender-affirming treatment is appropriate for a particular client. The assumption that medical and mental health professionals are overzealous in conducting gender affirming procedures for youth does not appear to be based on facts, but rather on the very prejudice and ignorance that places transgender and gender non-conforming youth at risk in the first place. For these reasons and more, I strongly oppose HB454.

Thank you, Anita Dacanay, M.Ed., LPC