

Adam Walko

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.

Hello, my name is Adam Walko. I am a 21 year old female-to-male transgender man who has lived in Ohio my entire life. I am a living example of why HB454 is a dangerous bill that should not be allowed to continue any further. Throughout my childhood and teenage years, I was incredibly unhappy and struggled with my mental health. No one fully understood what was wrong, not even myself. Doctors and psychiatrists couldn't pin a diagnosis or provide a treatment that would allow me to be a normal, happy child. When I was 15, I realized what it was. I was transgender. All this unhappiness I felt was the result of a deep seated wrongness inside of me, because I was in the wrong body and living the wrong life. But even though I now understood why I was suffering, the problem was still there. Doctors and psychiatrists guided me through the process of beginning my transition. I came out as transgender to the people in my life, I started dressing more masculine, and started using a masculine name and male pronouns. Things finally started to feel right in a way they never had before. After a year and a half, at the age of 16, I was approved to start hormone replacement therapy. Finally, my body was able to go through the proper puberty I should have always had. Ever since then, my life has improved tremendously. I went from a depressed, withdrawn, and defiant person to someone who is outgoing, jovial, comfortable in my own skin, and excited for my future. In a few months I will be graduating from The University of Akron with a Bachelor's of Fine Arts in Graphic Design, and I am interviewing with several companies for potential placement. This is a life I could have never dreamed of before. Everyone in my life can attest to the incredible change in happiness they saw from me throughout this process. I do not know where I would be today if I had not had access to gender affirming care at the time when I needed it. My case is not an isolated success story either, I am one of countless transgender people who have recieved unimagineable benefit from gender affirming care as a minor.

HB454 is attempting to prevent children from being given these vital, often life-saving resources. I beg of you, don't allow this bill to progress any farther. Put an end to this bill, and allow for vulnerable children just like I was to be given a chance at a future of happiness.