

Adam Clevenger

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify.

My name is Adam Clevenger; I use he/him and they/them pronouns. I am a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor and Supervisor in the State of Ohio. I am also a Sex Therapist, certified by the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists. I am the owner and Executive Director of Tandem Columbus, a group therapy practice in Columbus Ohio that specializes in sex and trauma therapy.

We frequently provide support and care to gender diverse people who exist across the sexuality spectrum. As both a mental health counselor and an Ohio resident, I am strongly opposed to HB 454 banning gender affirming healthcare for minors. As a mental health provider, I have 9 years of experience providing mental health support and treatment for people with many different gender orientations who may identify as transgender, non-binary, gender queer and questioning. Relying on the Standards of Care published by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, I have provided clinical assessment and the letters of support to help clients access hormone therapy and other gender affirming medical treatments throughout my career. I have worked with gender diverse minors and adults across the lifespan, and have provided support for their parents, children, siblings, partners, clergy, friends, roommates, teachers, and coworkers. People who are transgender, and those with diverse gender expression, have always existed and have often served important roles in society. Our care, support, and inclusion of people who are transgender reflects our commitment to equality. As a mental health professional, I understand that a sudden disruption in healthcare, or barriers to receiving health care otherwise supported by organizations like the American Academy of Pediatrics, could precipitate physical and mental health crises among trans youth that will have lasting consequences in adulthood. The medical interventions outlined in HB454 are often lifesaving interventions. During my time as a mental health counselor, I have directly observed the ways these interventions positively impact the mental health of my clients. Additionally, I have witnessed the vulnerability, compassion, and care of parents who are trusting medical and mental health professionals to provide accurate information and treatment to ensure their children continue to thrive, and become thriving adults. The proposed law, if enacted, will cause irreparable harm to individuals and their families, and will have consequences later in life as these adolescents become adults. As a mental health provider, I am providing this testimony knowing that my clients' mental health and wellbeing is dependent on access to well-supported medical interventions like those in question today.

I stand in solidarity with the parents, caregivers, and treatment providers for trans and gender diverse youth in protest of HB454. I ask you to consider my testimony and vote no on this harmful bill. I urge you to oppose HB 454 and protect our state's youth.