

Kelly Smith

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 Kelly Smith. I am the daughter of two conservative Republican small business owners from Marion. I have 17 years of Catholic education under my belt, and I now live in Cincinnati working for a local nonprofit. Right now, I'm mainly an Ohioan strongly opposed to House Bill 454, preventing transgender youth from receiving proper medical care.

My whole life I've seen how big government makes the lives of small business owners more difficult. Neither the state of Ohio nor the federal government are experts in manufacturing or auto body repair, but my parents constantly had to configure their business operations around state or federal regulations that they'll tell you didn't make the process any safer, cleaner, or more efficient. One of the main reasons they vote for and identify as Republicans is that they want big government to stay out of the businesses. I recently had the opportunity to talk to the teacher who had me in her class in second grade at St. Mary Elementary. She mentioned that most of the student body was able to attend because of Ohio's EdChoice program. These kids were given the opportunity to learn from a top notch teacher because the state passed a Republican-backed policy to help parents send their children to schools that align with their religious and academic values.

The Ohio Republican Party showed that they think parents are the experts when it comes to making choices for their kids. Right now, I'm totally confused as to how HB 454 is even up for consideration. Per the Ohio Republican Party's stated values and policy history, the Party believes that the owners and operators are the experts when it comes to their industry and that parents are the experts when it comes to their children. *So why are we backtracking when it comes to transgender children?* The parents of transgender children know their children better than any elected official. They love their children as deeply and wholly as any other parent. The doctors who work with children and transgender patients of any age know their patients and the science and medicine better than any elected official. They spend mind-numbing amounts on malpractice insurance and take an oath to do no harm to their patients. Instead of the government inserting themselves between these parents acting out of love and these doctors acting for the good of their patients with the science to support their recommendations, the government needs to backoff. I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this embarrassing bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.