

Michelle Hayford

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.

As an Ohio resident and mother of a 15 year old transgender son, I am writing to express my deep fear and concern that HB 454 is being considered by this committee. My son came out to my husband and I as transgender when he was 13 years old. At that time, we connected with the Adolescent and Young Adult Clinic at Dayton Children's Hospital and through their many resources and support we found a way through this transition with sensitive and responsible care providers. I am so grateful to the AYA clinic at Dayton Children's for getting us to the place we are now: our son is thriving at nearly 16 years old, learning to drive, with a loving friend group, and all the confidence I prayed he would rediscover. He is fully himself and whole. This is due to the medical care and support he's received from highly trained experts in the field of transgender youth medical care. To deny this care to my son, or any other transgender children in our state would be a travesty for those youth and their families and loved ones. I know that my son suffered with gender dysphoria before treatment, to the extent that the light dimmed in his eyes, his confidence from youth receded, his discomfort in his own skin and the resulting impact of depression and isolation was so difficult to bear witness to. Mental health struggles are real for youth with gender dysphoria. This bill would make it impossible for me to treat my son so that he can be himself and thrive. It would be devastating to have to relocate my family so that we can continue his care. Please don't do this to my family and all the other families of gender diverse youth in the state of Ohio. Please protect my son and kill this bill. The so-called 'SAFE' act is anything but safe--it is incredibly dangerous and opens up threats on every front to further denigrate the dignity and safety of all transgender children and their families and healthcare providers in Ohio. Additionally, this bill is a huge overreach to our fellow citizens of Ohio who are not only physicians, but also counselors and social workers, which would prevent them from executing best practices in their fields. This bill disregards the best practices of treating transgender youth supported by all the major medical organizations, and is against the accepted privacy and confidentiality standards of counselors and social workers. The governor of Arkansas vetoed the bill that HB 454 is replicating, and it was later halted by a federal judge. Given that this bill is unlikely to meet the standards of ensuring our constitutional rights as citizens, why put the transgender youth, their families, and their care providers through the trauma of even considering this dangerous legislation?

The so-called SAFE Act isn't safe. It's cruel. Michelle Hayford