

Kinsey Kolega

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.

I work as a nurse practitioner as part of the Cleveland Clinic's Transgender Surgery and Medicine Program. Educating people about hormone therapy; its potential risks and expected changes, is part of my daily job. Access to gender-affirming care is quite literally lifesaving. I could talk for hours about the health statistics of trans individuals- how they are at higher risk of experiencing violence, poverty, and suicide, among other things, but instead I'd like to share a tradition we have in our office. When we first prescribe hormone therapy (after 2-3 visits in which we thoroughly discuss fertility preservation, health risks, monitoring, and anticipated body changes- including those that will be permanent), we celebrate with the patients by bringing in a fan to 'clack' for them. We tell them that we want to acknowledge that this is a special day for them- an important step in their journey of living as their authentic selves. Many people tear up. Some laugh, or clap. Most do a combination of all three. It never gets old.

I urge you to oppose HB 454 and protect our state's youth.