

(Rachel McKee) Testimony in Opposition to Ohio HB 454

I am a mental health professional with a degree in Criminal Justice and 10+ years of accumulated experience working with both adults and youth through advocacy as Guardian Ad Litem and as a victims' advocate for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. I have worked with at risk youth as a court coordinator for the Juvenile Court System, and provided mental health services as a crisis counselor, a habilitation technician, and I now work in behavioral health services. Furthermore, I am a single parent/guardian of 3 non-cisgender kids ranging from 12-17 years old. Ohio HB 454 is a direct attack on my children, myself as a parent and a professional, and my family as a whole. This bill is NOT supported by medical facts or professionals who specialize pediatric endocrinology or psychology. It is supported by research that dates back 1905, and social stigmas based on personal beliefs, irrational fears based on a lack of knowledge, and general intolerance based on individual comfort levels.

In my testimony, I hope to provide answers to common questions I hear. Questions such as, "How does someone know what it feels like to be a different gender?" and "If this is natural, then why don't we see it in other animals too?" If you have additional questions, I will do my best to answer them as well.

In December of 2019, Liam Knox published an article titled, *Media's 'detransition' narrative is fueling misconceptions, Trans Advocates Say*. He writes, "In a 2015 survey of nearly 28,000 people conducted by the U.S.-based National Center for Transgender Equality, only 8 percent of respondents reported detransitioning," Knox goes on to say "The most common reason for detransitioning, according to the survey, was pressure from a parent, while only 0.4 percent of respondents said they detransitioned after realizing transitioning wasn't right for them." That means that 27,888 of those 28,000 people benefited from gender affirming care. Knox also reports in this article that, "The numbers are even lower for nonsurgical transition methods, like taking puberty blockers. According to a 2018 study of a cohort of transgender young adults at the largest gender-identity clinic in the Netherlands, 1.9 percent of adolescents who started puberty suppressants did not go on to pursue hormone therapy, typically the next step in the transition process."

According to a survey published by the Trevor Project in 2019, "Transgender youth reported significantly increased rates of depression, suicidality, and victimization compared to their cisgender peers. Notably, in the past year, one in three transgender youth reported attempting suicide, almost one-third reported being a victim of sexual violence, and more than half reported a two-week period of depression."

Dr. J. Graham Theisen, OBGYN and National Institutes of Health, Women's Reproductive Health scholar, participated in an article on ScienceDaily.com, based on research she conducted at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University. In this article she states, "21 variants in 19 genes have been found in estrogen signaling pathways of the brain critical to establishing whether the brain is masculine or feminine." She explains that these variants can alter the pathways so that the brain does not get masculinized in some natal males or does in some natal females. She states that both can result in an incongruence between a person's internal gender and their external sex.

This research was followed up with animal studies in animals that have the same 4 areas of the brain with pathways leading to development of a male or female brains that humans have. Laboratory studies showed that animals with similar disruptions in these brain pathways during this critical period of development displayed cross sex behaviors, such as female rodents and non-human primates mounting and thrusting, and males taking on a more traditionally female posture during mating.

Dr. Theisen concludes, "Once someone has a male or female brain, they have it and you're not going to change it. The goal of treatments like hormone therapy and surgery is to help their body more closely match where

their brain already is.” Theisen also notes that, “We are all full of genetic variants, including ones that give us

Testimony in Opposition to Ohio HB 454

blue eyes versus brown or green, and the majority do not cause disease rather help make us individuals. I think gender is as unique and as varied as every other trait we have.”

There are several medical articles and research that has been published that support this study’s findings. The statistics support this study’s findings. The several thousands of children whose lives have been saved by gender affirming care support this study’s findings. This is not a generational phenomenon, or a result of any political movement. With greater populations there will be greater numbers of minorities. With greater and more evolved sense of self-awareness, civil rights, and social justice along with advances in medical science and technology we now know that this is real, and non-cisgender people can now be more open about who they are and get access to the care they need. Unless, that is, you remove the rights of parents to provide their children with the best possible care. Unless you decide to criminalize that care and kill our children with ignorance and intolerance. It’s heartbreaking that Erin Brewer was victimized and did not have access to the trauma informed care that she needed. This care was not available to the average citizen back then, and since the 1970s there have been incredible strides in understanding trauma, the brain, sociology, and psychology. I sincerely hope that she has been provided access to that care now.

Finally, I would like to take an opportunity to challenge our nation’s politicians to create national laws that protect our children. As a GAL, and most certainly now, it is clear that due to children not having the same rights as adults, so many times they are victims to a system that favors laws over their best interests. It’s time that legislation is created to protect them from legal loopholes that strip parents of the ability to make sound medical decisions on their behalf, and strip children of the right to advocate for themselves and their overall well-being. Thank you for your time and consideration.