

Cole Papadopoulos

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 Cole Papadopoulos. I am one of your many transgender constituents. I am testifying to ask that you vote No, and do everything else in your power to stop HB 454.

Some trans advocates have nicknamed it 'Leelah's Bill' in the memory of Leelah Alcorn, the transgender, teenage Ohioian whose parents abused her by preventing her from transitioning, until she killed herself. HB 454 will cause many more deaths like Leelah's if it is passed. I am 35 years old and began to understand my gender identity and begin transition in my early 20s. Obstacles to my transition during my adult years caused me mental health issues that still affect me today, and caused me to spend years of my life in unhappy or unhealthy circumstances. I know that for children, with even less personal autonomy, who are in such a vulnerable time in their lives, preventing access to care and also forcibly disclosing their feelings to potentially unsupportive or abusive parents will literally end children's lives, not to mention cause lifelong traumas to those who survive. Please oppose HB 454 and any other policies written by right-wing ideologies that would control the decisions and lives of transgender people. Listen to our local transgender community organizations instead. Thank you.

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