

November 16, 2022

Jeff Phair
4843 Long Dr
Liberty Township, OH 45011
RE: Opposition Testimony for HB 454

Chairwoman Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Denson
and Members of the Families, Aging & Human Services Committee:

My name is Jeff Phair. I am a business owner, an athlete, and a father to 3 amazing kids. I am here today to urge you to reject HB 454 and to leave all decisions related to medical care for transgender minors, in the hands of parents, guardians and medical professionals.

As the father of three kids, I understand firsthand the tremendous responsibility that comes with parenthood and the burden associated with making responsible medical decisions in complex care situations. This is not a responsibility that I take lightly.

My children are ages 13, 14 & 22 now but from the time my kids were babies, my wife and I carefully conducted our own research and consulted with trained medical professionals before making any medical-related decisions for our kids. From vaccinations to ear infections, ADHD & something more complex, like Gender Dysphoria, we have always taken a thoughtful approach which includes carefully studying all options, weighing pros and cons and talking in depth with leading pediatricians, expert mental health professionals and parents and who have children with the same or similar diagnosis.

Of course, some decisions have been easier to make than others. For Example, when I first learned that one of my children may be transgender, I'll admit it was very hard for me to accept. Part of this was due to how I was raised and the fact that I had no experience with LGBTQ people. I didn't think any of it was real for quite some time. After all, I was nearly 40 years old and I didn't know anyone who was transgender and it wasn't something you heard about on the news or read about in the paper. And it certainly wasn't a commonly discussed religious issue or a hot button political issue. So, I had the mindset that my child was too young to know who they were, and I told myself that they were confused and it was just a phase they would grow out of. It took me quite a bit of time to wrap my head around all of it. For nearly a year I tried to convince myself, my wife and anyone else who would listen, that all of it would pass. Because of this approach, I experienced a strained relationship with my child, and I watched as their condition deteriorated.

In time I began to see that things were not changing and this was likely not a phase. So, I started to educate myself and truly get to know who my child was on the inside. And, it

was then that I realized that my position was not only wrong but was detrimental to my child's health.

When I learned there was a clinic at our local children's hospital, my wife and I decided to set up an appointment. I was a bit skeptical and quite nervous, but also felt grateful to be able to consult with a team of medical professionals, and when I walked out the appointment, I left feeling empowered and hopeful.

The appointment itself was nearly two hours long and we saw several providers-All of which were very professional and asked a lot of questions. Looking for a concrete answer, (as to whether or not my child was or wasn't transgender), I recall being told that only time would tell. There is no bloodwork, or brain imaging to confirm one way or another, so the best thing we could do is just watch and love. The answer was very simple, and that was perfect because I am a simple guy.

We were essentially encouraged to stay connected to our child and to try to do more listening than talking and to show our support by simply following our child's lead. This meant walking a step behind, not encouraging anything one way or another but simply giving our child the space to figure out who they are and allowing them to express themselves through things like their hairstyle or clothing that more closely aligns with how they see themselves. All of this made sense to my wife and I who had always been careful when it comes to making medical decisions for our children. We found this approach to be *thoughtful, compassionate and above all, responsible*.

We went home and followed the advice we had been given in the months and years to follow and we also began meeting families with kids like ours. When we got together with those other families, we shared stories about our kids and what medical advice we had received from our childrens' doctors & mental health providers and we quickly realized there were dozens of kids like ours who lived near us and all of those families & children shared similar experiences with the physicians at our local pediatric hospital.

I think this is *very important* for the members of this committee to hear because I listened to the testimony given earlier this year that suggests that the highly trained teams of medical professionals in Ohio Children's Hospitals are reckless, negligent, and perhaps even scaring parents or rushing the treatment for transgender minors. I'm here today to make it very clear that at no point in time did my family experience that, nor do we know of any family who has had such an experience. In fact, it's been quite the opposite.

I would also like to make sure that members of this committee are aware that if opposition testimony was given the same amount of time as proponent testimony, I am confident that you would hear dozens more stories like ours. Stories of families who participated in watchful waiting, stories of children and young adults who have grown up trans and have NEVER wavered. And, stories from moms and dads who are certain their child is alive today because of the skilled care being provided by Ohio Children's Hospitals. If given more than two hours, for opposition testimony, you'd hear from countless parents like me who have NO agenda except to help their children grow up to

be healthy and happy, just like each of you want for your own children and grandchildren.

I have seen my child blossom in these past 8 years, and I've witnessed great things. All of which would not be possible if we did not have access to the life-saving medical care that is being provided by Ohio Children's Hospitals. Please take a moment to CONSIDER that this is the same medical care you and your friends seek out when a child you know breaks a bone, endures a concussion, or experiences a serious illness. These hospitals and doctors are NOT acting irresponsibly. What is irresponsible is politicizing a deeply personal, complex family issue and limiting parental rights and medical freedoms. I urge you to say NO to HB 454 and keep decisions related to the treatment of transgender youth in the hands of parents and pediatricians.

Politics has NO place in this matter.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jeff Phair