

Chairman Lipps, Vice-Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and Members of the Public Health Committee:

I am writing to urge you to vote no on House Bill 68. Let me tell you why I feel strongly that this is not a bill that will result in better care for underage members of our society.

In 2014, we met new neighbors, a family of four, with a daughter (C) about 4 years of age. She was an outgoing, happy, inquisitive child I soon found shared an interest in all things outdoors, especially things I had in my yard. We became good buddies and shared times together. After several years, she began to be quiet, seldom coming over to check on the progress in my compost bin, and her appearance changed as well. She had very dark circles under her eyes, and my husband and I were quite worried. In conversation with her mother, she revealed that sleep had become difficult for C and they were working through the issue with their pediatrician.

It was another year and a half to two years before C revealed that she felt she was actually a boy, which was a shock to the parents and all concerned, but at last a reason for the change in demeanor gave therapists and family members a better idea what had been going on. C also revealed that she (now he "L") was so unhappy and uncertain how people would react that he had been contemplating suicide.

This was still a prepubescent child, but L was very certain of his mind (he is extremely intelligent and well spoken). Revealing his truth and feeling accepted among family, friends, and peers gave L back some of what I had originally seen of the happy C. He is too intelligent to not know what is around the corner, and last year at age 12, came rushing over to tell me the joy that his parents had agreed that when the specialists they had been seeing felt the time was right that they would give their permission for him to begin the medication necessary to block the onset of puberty. I need to stress that this is the most joyous and relieved I have seen this child in years.

House Bill 68 would remove the right of an underage citizen of Ohio to feel optimistic about his future and force him to develop secondary sexual characteristics that could never be undone. The effects of the medication can be ended if desired at a point later in life if he should choose to discontinue the treatment. It is **TOTALLY REVERSABLE**.

Since L has already felt hopeless enough to contemplate suicide, I have every reason to suspect he might again, but this time L will be more worldly and able to move about the world. Could any of us feel right about not preventing this?

L's parents are educated, intelligent, caring members of society and they may well choose to move to a state where their own rights to choose the care they feel best for their child can be guaranteed.

Is this what the lawmakers of Ohio wish to have happen? Do you want our best, brightest and most productive citizens to move out of state? Do members understand the intense toll this takes on families and is risking the unnecessary pain and suffering of even one citizen worth political points? Please consider that until you have been through something like this, you really have no idea how much love, care, thought, and effort goes into making the decision to follow the advice and standard of care for trans members of society. Please also consider that you may not be as well-informed as members of the medical and psychological communities who have literally spent decades of their lives studying trans issues and coming up with recommendations for the standard of care for their treatment.

I ask you to vote no on House Bill 68,

B. Whittaker