

DATE: Wednesday 5/24/2023

RE: Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 68

TO: The Ohio House Public Health Policy Committee

FROM: Amanda Rosenblatt MSW LISW

Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Ohio House Public Health Policy Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in writing.

My name is Amanda Rosenblatt. I am an independently licensed social worker in the state of Ohio. I am writing to testify against HB 68. I oppose this bill because of the workforce implications it will have for social workers in the state of Ohio.

Social workers provide a variety of services to Ohio residents, including children and families. Some of the roles a social worker has are to diagnose mental health conditions, medical case management, behavioral case management, therapy, referral linkage, and more<sup>1</sup>. All of these roles allow social workers to learn more about the families they serve and allow social workers to effectively provide client centered services to serve each person specifically.

HB 68 limits social workers' ability to effectively participate in client centered care. The definition of client centered care is that the social worker listens to the client and family and allows them to direct the care and determine what their goals are<sup>2</sup>.

Gender affirming care is an example of client centered care because it allows the social worker to listen to the client and respect their own wishes and goals. Some examples of gender affirming care are supporting clients as they wear the clothes they want, using pronouns and names requested by clients, and using non-gendered phrases to address people or groups. These simple steps taken by social workers can be under attack in HB 68.

The punitive nature of this bill will make it more difficult for social workers to feel comfortable and safe practicing in the state of Ohio, especially while serving youth. This may cause some social workers to not accept minor clients, change fields, or leave Ohio to continue practicing social work in a more supportive state. The practice liability and potential consequences to social workers' licenses that this law creates will cause an already overrun mental health system to have even less workers available to meet critical needs.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dictionary.apa.org/clinical-social-work>

<sup>2</sup> <https://dictionary.apa.org/client-centered-therapy>

In addition to preventing social workers from providing ethical care, the requirements of this bill will also be cumbersome for social workers. Social workers already screen for any comorbid conditions so having to refer out for ADHD/ASD assessments will make the client wait to receive any care until that is completed. The inability to serve clients until this assessment has been completed could cause harm to the client immediately.

Ohio should continue improving mental health access and workforce development, but to do that, social workers must be able to practice effectively without fear of causing harm to clients or facing consequences from the state. House Bill 68 will place unnecessary burdens on social workers and the mental health profession. The most crucial thing to remember is that children's mental health care is important and should be provided. This bill is moving in the wrong direction.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,  
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