

Health Public Policy Committee
Carolyn Fox
HB 68 Opponent Testimony
May 22, 2023

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

I feel compelled to offer my perspective on HB 68 as a teacher of middle school students and an administrator for elementary school students. When teaching the 7th grade, my yearlong curricular focus was exposing students to the strength and uniqueness of our US Constitution, including the rights we all enjoy regardless of our diverse beliefs, backgrounds and life decisions. Underlying that, of course, was the caveat that no one has the right to hurt another and we practiced that daily in how we accepted others and their ideas. As an administrator, principal of an elementary division, the faculty and I modeled and taught the children acceptance and understanding of others while respecting the rights of all to share opinions and pursue individual needs and interests. In considering any academic or social/emotional recommendations for individual children, parents were always a part of the team. Parents know their children holistically and must be involved in making decisions for their own children and their futures.

After 40 years as an educator and then reading HB 68, I concluded that the rights of parents will be compromised drastically affecting the well-being of our children. I have had the privilege of experiencing a diverse cross-section of children and their families. Children learn valuable life lessons at school but the adults in their lives learn from them, too. The diversity I experienced included 4 transgender students, dating back a number of years to present; one is now in Middle School. My learning curve included observing the journey each of these students followed and, fortunately, the positive outcomes which allowed each of them to be healthy, contributing community members. Watching students move from unhappiness and confusion to self-realization and social/emotional health has been tremendously rewarding. The combination of a partnership with families on a daily basis at school and the availability of medical assistance in Ohio has insured that these individuals, so close to my heart, will be or are intelligent, contributing members of our society, the ultimate goal for any educator.

I do have grave concerns regarding HB 68, however. If passed, I fear our children will endure hardships unnecessarily, parents will be stripped of their right to make decisions for their own children and the medical experts will be inhibited in the medical care they can offer. This would be a tragedy in my mind having had first-hand experience in observing the developmental trajectory of transgender students. It is difficult currently to find consensus on many topics but it appears that universally we value both parental rights and the recognition that mental health issues for our children are paramount. HB 68 would negate both of those considerations for families of transgender children, including the children I know and love. I believe that for parents of a transgender child, the only choice would be to move from Ohio to insure parental decision-making, mental and physical health, safety and medical options that should be afforded equally to all children depending on individual needs determined by doctors and parents, not the State.

It would be such an economic loss to the State if families found it necessary to move out of Ohio. Not only would Ohio lose current wage-earners, medical experts and intellectual contributors but the future would look bleak for Ohio if our young people, whether trans or not, decided Ohio was not a state that enjoyed and respected individual needs and rights. The future is with our youth and HB 68 does not reflect the mindset of our young people. I respectfully implore you to reconsider HB 68 and insure that Ohio is a place for everyone to comfortably live, work and have families now and into the future.

Sincerely and Passionately,

Carolyn Fox
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