

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

I am writing to express firm opposition to HB68, proposing Gender Affirming Care for minors in Ohio. This bill is extreme governmental overreach. Doctors, parents/guardians and children are the only people who should be involved in the medical decisions concerning health care for children. These decisions should be confidential between these parties, and should not have any interference by any branch of government. Parents/guardians are best equipped to make complex medical decisions and should have the right to decide the best treatment course for their child.

As a parent of a trans adult who I raised in Ohio, I find this legislation alarming. I remember clearly when my offspring's doctor said to me "I'm sure you'd like your child to wait until they are 25 to start gender affirming care. I'm also sure you'd like your child to be alive when they are 25." That sentence seared my heart. The Trevor Project 2021 *National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health* found that 52 percent of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered suicide. Gender affirming health care reduces adverse mental health outcomes and improves the quality of life for transgender youth. As a result of consulting with excellent doctors and counselors, our offspring was able to receive life-saving care. Health care decisions for minors should only be in the hands of physicians, parents and children.

This bill will not help to keep children safe, but rather will create a life-threatening situation for transgender children. Research is clear that gender affirming health care can save the lives of transgender children. (see <https://opa.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2022-03/gender-affirming-care-young-people-march-2022.pdf>) If this bill becomes law, Ohio families with transgender children will be forced to leave the state to receive care, and Ohio will continue to lose the creativity, and productivity of these families. Already, the draconian anti-trans legislation that has been introduced into the Ohio legislature has conveyed the terrifying message to LGBTQ + citizens of Ohio that they are not safe here. As a faculty member in an Ohio public university, I have already seen highly talented prospective LGBTQ+ students choose not to attend our institution because of the clear and present danger they see in the Ohio legislature. Is this the kind of state we want to be? I think not. I want to see Ohio be a beacon of creativity, intellectual productivity, and a model of human rights. This kind of state will be one where people can flourish and want to raise their families. The proposed legislation threatens such a vision. Please vote no on HB 68 and all legislation that seeks to curtail the rights of transgender citizens of Ohio.

Attached please find my witness information form and testimony.

Respectfully submitted, Mark A. Raider