



first community

where everyone is accepted

May 22, 2023

House Bill 68 Opposition  
Attn: Chair Scott Lipps  
Vice Chair Brian Stewart  
Ranking Member Beth Liston  
Public Health Policy Committee

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

---

**SOUTH**

1320 Cambridge Boulevard  
Columbus, Ohio 43212  
(614) 488-0681  
(614) 488-2763 FAX

**NORTH**

3777 Dublin Road  
Columbus, Ohio 43221  
(614) 488-0681  
(614) 777-4098 FAX

info@FCchurch.com  
**FCchurch.com**

My name is Rev. Sarah Kientz, and I am the Minister to Youth at First Community Church in Columbus. My clergy role includes overseeing Camp Akita, a residential summer camp our church owns in Logan, Ohio. I am writing to oppose HB68 due to my witnessing the life-giving power of gender-affirming care.

1,500 campers call Camp Akita home each summer. A few years ago, we welcomed a camper named Ash. Ash was a painfully shy middle schooler who struggled making friends and sat to the side during capture the flag and campfire songs. Ash felt too anxious inside the dining hall, so staff would eat with Ash at a picnic table outside. During these meals, Ash barely spoke.

The next year, Ash's parents called to tell us that Ash was a boy, and could we please place him in a boys' cabin. We made the arrangements so that he could live with fellow boys.

The behavior shift we saw in Ash that summer was overwhelmingly positive. He slid down the soap slide, made friends with cabin mates, and sang along to the campfire songs. He even ate in the noisy dining hall. It was difficult to believe that this happy, healthy camper was the child we were the most concerned about just 12 months prior.

The difference? Ash had received gender-affirming care.

I worried about how other campers might treat Ash, especially those who knew he was trans. But not a single child expressed discomfort, confusion, or brought forth any concerns. Ash was treated the same as any other camper: with love, compassion, and acceptance, just as Jesus taught us to treat one another.

I didn't want families to have to ask whether Camp Akita would accept their child, as Ash's parents had so bravely done. So in March 2022, we published Camp Akita's Gender Diversity and Inclusion policy. It clearly states that all campers are welcome, accepted, and included at Camp Akita. It allowed campers and their parents should decide which cabin fits them best, because parents know their children best. Our policy received overwhelming support.



first community

where everyone is accepted

The problem came when right-wing extremist social media got wind of our policy. In July 2022, we received calls from individuals across the country who used hate speech, slurs, and threats of violence toward our summer camp. We had to inform the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, and local law enforcement of these threats.

I thank God that no violence came to Camp Akita that summer, but I'm also aware that I will never know if those individuals simply decided not to act, or if law enforcement intervened.

What I do know is that legislation like HB68 fuels an extremist, hateful ideology that seeks to wage a deadly war against children. It's legislation like this that creates the false narrative that trans kids, their parents, and their doctors are dangerous, when really, this kind of state-sanctioned bullying is dangerous. To "other" these children is to say that it's ok to threaten and vilify them. It perpetuates a narrative that trans children do not deserve the same opportunities for health and wellbeing that other children receive. This bill assumes that politicians know more about pediatric healthcare than physicians, and more about what's best for children than their parents, which is simply not true.

Please vote no on HB68, not just for the sake of gender diverse children, but to stop fueling the extremist groups who use bills like this to justify violence. This legislation threatens the safety of all children.

I have seen first-hand the ways that gender-affirming care allows a child to feel fully human, worthy, and loved—just as God intended. I urge you to treat trans kids as their cabin mates do: with love, compassion, and acceptance. Please vote no on HB68.

In faith,

**Rev. Sarah C. Kientz**

Minister to Youth and Camp Akita

**First Community Church**

(614) 488-0681, Ext. 126 | [skientz@FCchurch.com](mailto:skientz@FCchurch.com)

---

#### **SOUTH**

1320 Cambridge Boulevard  
Columbus, Ohio 43212  
(614) 488-0681  
(614) 488-2763 FAX

#### **NORTH**

3777 Dublin Road  
Columbus, Ohio 43221  
(614) 488-0681  
(614) 777-4098 FAX

[info@FCchurch.com](mailto:info@FCchurch.com)

**FCchurch.com**