

**Testimony of Rick Colby
Father of a Transgender Son
to the
House Public Health Policy Committee
May 24, 2023**

Chairman Lipps, members of the committee, my name is Rick Colby. I live in Columbus and I'm the father of a transgender son, Ashton Colby. My son, who testified back in the fall, and I oppose House Bill 88, sponsored by Rep. Gary Click

I love my son dearly, just as I know many of you with children do yours. I'm a Republican, a Christian and as anti-woke as you can get. My son is also Christian and is transgender.

I have watched my son transform over the past eleven years into the son and man any father would be proud to have. I watch the "debate" about transgender people and attempts to ban gender-affirming care and I'm appalled. The people wanting to ban gender-affirming care have no idea what it is like to be transgender or to have a transgender child.

This is not something that is done on a whim. It is a deep-rooted dysphoria that, yes, even has spiritual elements to it. My son has a masculine soul and he said he has felt this way since he was five. He tried so hard to overcompensate and to try to fit into being a feminine young woman participating in beauty pageants. For years he tried to be a young woman. That didn't ease the ache and sadness in his soul and it was only until he was able to transition to be a young man did the light in his eyes turn back on.

You've got to go easy on this. This is a terrible bill. This is not the simple issue being portrayed by the anti-trans people. In my experience, this is all case-by case. There are no sweeping generalizations to be made, pro or con.

Ashton's journey is heroic. If you had seen the way he has fought to become the man he has always wanted to be, and the things he has endured to get there, you would have a better understanding about what it means to be transgender.

Completely banning all medical interventions for any individual under 18 with gender dysphoria is a horrendous idea. It will most likely result in suicides, depression and substance abuse. It goes against internationally recognized health guidelines.

When Ashton started his transition eleven years ago, there weren't children's hospitals with clinics focused on transgender care. We had so many challenges trying to find good care for him. Young people are having better care now. This is a wonderful thing. My son, and others like him, were pioneers.

My son has spoken publicly about his gender transition to thousands of people each year. I met a friend of his, another trans man, who started on testosterone at age 16 and

who is now in his mid-twenties. Under this bill, a person like him would have not been able to go on testosterone.

Please do not create roadblocks to transgender people becoming who they are meant to be and becoming productive members of society. I urge you to vote against this bill.