

Connor opposition testimony to HB68
The Rev. Alice Connor

Chairman Lipps, Ranking Member Liston, members of the House Public Health Policy Committee, I am The Rev. Alice Connor, evangelical pastor and mother of a trans child who came out a year ago at 13.

I have been ordained almost 20 years in the Episcopal Church and have been working as a campus minister for the Evangelical Lutheran Church at University of Cincinnati for most of that time. I have a masters degree in theology, and I have had hundreds of LGBTQ students in my life, many of whom are trans. I have lived this in a way I doubt any of you have.

House Bill 68 is, in Biblical terms, a plague and a sin. I said this very thing in testimony against HB6 and will continue to say it until you hear us. Criminalizing gender-affirming health care--of any kind--destroys lives. It chooses death, contrary to the Bible and 2000 years of Christian teaching. If you allow HB68 to continue, you are choosing death for other people, killing them because you're not listening.

There are some loud Christian voices supporting this bill. I am here to be clear that those voices do not represent me nor the entirety of the Christian faith. Indeed, there are hundreds of thousands of the Christian faithful who are gay and trans, who love gay and trans people, and who are horrified by bills and theologies like this. The loud Christian voices do not speak for me. They do not speak for my students or my family or my church. They do not even speak for the majority of conservative Christians. There's a recent Fox News poll where 86% of respondents said it's a problem that families with transgender children are targets of political attacks.

We will speak for ourselves. And we need you to actually listen.

Let me tell you a story--don't stop me if you've heard it before. There was a man named Moses, a shepherd. He was out in the fields with the sheep when he saw something strange, something surprising. It was a bush that was on fire, but was not burning into a crisp. It was just strangely, amazingly--and continuously--on fire. Another person might have thought, "Huh, that's odd," and walked right on by. Still another might have panicked in the face of this unexpected sight and snuffed it out. Moses, the book of Exodus says, turned aside to look; he saw and stopped and listened. What's wild to me about this story, is what the miracle actually is. Our Rabbi friends would say that the miracle in this story is not the bush itself, but Moses stopping and listening. The miracle is not something flashy but this guy seeing something he didn't understand, something that might even have been threatening, and stopping to understand it better.

You are Moses in this story. You have the opportunity to listen and to change. Listen over the roar of your certainty about biological sex, listen to our stories of fear and identity, to show up for the trans youth of this state who need you to defend them.

I was overjoyed the day my kid came out to me because of the trust and safety they felt with me to share that part of their life. I am proud to be their mom. I am also terrified to be their mom. When will they be assaulted or insulted because someone can't tell what gender they are? Will they cut their own beautiful skin to relieve the pain or attempt suicide because they can't see past the alienation and disgust thrown at them by their peers and by their government?

A couple months ago, one of my trans students told me about a 12 year old girl in Mississippi. She had committed suicide because her family and peers were so cruel to her about being trans. She couldn't envision things getting better. Twelve years old. I said to this student, "I couldn't have imagined at 12 how to even go about committing suicide, much less being so filled with despair that was the only option."

He said quietly, "My first attempt was at 9."

This is an ache close to my heart--his despair, hers, so many others'.

And this is the result of bills like HB68. At CPAC in March, Michael Knowles said "transgenderism must be eradicated from public life entirely." This is the future that Representative Gary Click and so many others want. But this is -not- the future that God wants. This bill, that you are even considering it, is the kind of thing the God of the Bible would send prophets about. And maybe he has. The God of the Bible who so many of us worship is a god of liberation, a God of the marginalized, not of the powerful.

Be honest with yourselves and with God who is surely present in this room with us. Do you agree with Knowles and Rep Click, really? We deserve your honesty. And God already knows what you think. Eradication, detransitioning, these are genocide. These are sin. I do not use this language lightly. Our trans youth are not threats to be eliminated, they are miracles to be celebrated-- strange, surprising, and amazing.

I beg you as a fellow Christian and a parent, do not pass this bill.