

In-Person Testimony Opposing HB 68

Cam Ogden

My name is Cam Ogden, and I am a former trans kid. After 6 years of counseling, and being prevented from accessing gender-affirming care, I stand here today as a transgender adult.

Like many trans people, I spent a long time living as someone that I wasn't. My parents were convinced if they just ignored my problems, or took me to the right therapist, they would have a cisgender child in a few years.

Despite **the unscientific beliefs of HB 68's author and supporters**, that's not how being trans works.

There were of course questions after I came out to my parents. Popular media portrays trans people as falling into gender stereotypes, and I've gotten punched in the jaw more times than I've put on lipstick. So although I'd known for years that I wasn't cisgender, the news came as a surprise to my parents.

They took me to a therapist for anxiety and other mental health challenges. I didn't understand why I couldn't go to someone who specialized in working with trans kids. My therapist *was* helping me, just not with my gender identity or dysphoria. Every time I tried to talk about discomfort with my body or the way my deepening voice broke my heart, I was shut down.

We'll talk about *that* when you're more self-confident.

We'll talk about *that* when you're exercising more.

We'll talk about *that* when you're doing better in school.

I did everything asked of me and more. It didn't help.

I grew more confident in myself. With that confidence, I became certain that I was transgender, and that brought the realization of what the changes of puberty meant for my future.

I exercised more and built the physically fit body person is supposed to be proud of. That didn't stop me from burning my body hair off with Nair, resulting in sustained chemical burns that I had to treat alone.

I worked hard in high school, earning a GPA of 3.8 and a 35 on the ACT despite having a learning disability, but I couldn't imagine my academic success leading to a brighter future. Because I saw no future for myself as the person I was.

My mother told me that I would never "look feminine enough" to live as a woman, and my father said to me that these feelings would go away as I grew up.

I bounced between multiple therapists who all treated my transgender identity like the waste product of some other issue. No matter how much of myself I "fixed", in their eyes I remained broken.

I should have received the evidence-based care that I needed for my challenges. Instead, I got the brand of conversion therapy that HB 68 mandates become the only form of care available for trans kids in Ohio: *Watchful Waiting*.

"Watchful Waiting" is nothing more than a clever euphemism that the sponsor of HB 68 and other conversion therapy advocates use to hide the truth. Watchful Waiting permanently has damaged me and many others, but thankfully it didn't kill me. I refused to give up on life before I'd gotten a chance to be **myself**. So I kept moving forward. Not because I hated the person I was born as, but because I loved the person I knew I could become.

I'm lucky because I made it, and I'm luckier still because I get to speak in front of you all and be heard. The children who this legislation actually impacts will get no hearings to make their suffering known. If you try hard enough, I'm sure some of you will find a way to ignore the consequences of your actions like usual. That doesn't change the reality though.

Forcing someone to detransition, or preventing them from transitioning in the first place, is not a neutral act. Please don't force every trans kid in this state to go through what I experienced.