

Dear Public Health Policy Committee,

My name is Rev. Trip Porch. I am a resident of Columbus where I am a pastor and a parent of a child in the public school system. I am writing to speak in opposition to House Bill 68. I urge you to vote against this bill and stand in solidarity and love with Ohio's children, their parents, and their medical professionals who's gender affirming care saves lives.

I chose to write today specifically because I am a faith leader and the rationale for anti-trans legislation often appeals to christian faith. As a pastor, I can attest that any provision which seeks to protect, love, and care for marginalized and abused communities such as our lgbtq+ students is very much in line with the teaching and life of Jesus of Nazareth. He regularly sought to recognize and care for those who were ostracized and removed from their society because of who they were, the conditions they were born with, and other identities that left people rejected by their communities. And, even more emphatically he taught his followers to do likewise.

Even if you don't fully understand or even disagree with the science behind gender identity and how gender identity differs from biological sex, I recommend committee members at minimum consider the statistics facing trans youth and particularly the mental health crisis of trans youth and consider how policies that protect lgbtq+ students actually can save lives. According to the Human Rights Campaign 3/4 of trans students feel unsafe at school. And Data indicate that 82% of transgender individuals have considered killing themselves and 40% have attempted suicide, with suicidality highest among transgender youth. [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32345113/>]

The data on trans and gender nonconforming youth goes on like this. In almost every area of life, genderqueer youth find barrier after barrier that keeps them from being themselves and being seen as themselves. And the results are clear--mentally, socially, and physically. Queer young people who do not get support from family, faith groups, and social networks are more depressed; more anxious; more likely to smoke, drink, and use drugs; and more likely to commit suicide than their straight or cisgender peers.

It's crucial to be aware of the risks faced by trans and gender nonconforming youth. But it's just as important not to reduce youth to these risks. Many queer youth live full and happy lives. I have known many of such students first hand in my ministry. And studies show that with support and love from parents and supportive adults (and yes, even representatives such as yourselves), transgender youth have outcomes essentially the same as cisgender youth regarding health, safety, and happiness. As a Christian who follows the greatest commandment, to love my neighbor as I love myself, I urge you to vote against hb68 as an act of love to some of your most vulnerable constituents.

In peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Trip Porch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Trip" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Porch".

Rev. Trip Porch