

Testimony: April 26, 2023. Marissa Kuechenmeister

Thank you for the opportunity to share my voice on this bill. Based on the positions held by the sponsor of this bill, I can recognize that the piles of data I've collected over the past several months is irrelevant. The stories from my adult trans brothers and sisters, those who have been fighting for gender-affirming care since their late teens, none of this will sway an agenda that has already been laid out. Instead, I would like to begin with my concerns regarding the strong religious affiliation and lack of education regarding the sponsor of this bill. Representative Click is currently a pastor at Freemont Chapel Church, and his education includes a Bachelor's in Religious Education. As a young constituent, I suppose I'm curious as to why a pastor is proposing legislature regarding public health policy. In his opening statement regarding this bill, Representative Click claims, "During the course of the last General Assembly...both my professional and my youthful witnesses [were] treated poorly and harassed in committee by a 'group of activists and organizers' with the aid of activist Ken Schneck and the Buckeye Flame." Yet, Representative Click has been sued for harassing his opposition. Though he has filed a dismissal, there is a recorded video of Mr. Click harassing Representative Ackinson saying that she was "trash" and that "nobody liked her". Representative Click has also described Representative Ackinson as "antisemitic" and a "Muslim sympathizer". He continues, even attacking Representative Ackinson's personal finances. It doesn't stop there, as Mr. Click has also claimed that Representative Ackinson is a "criminal", despite any evidence or legal backing. Mr. Click has also weaponized his religion against others, calling Sarah Caruthers' "godless". As if godliness has any place in our legislature.

My other concern is the illegal gerrymandering that has occurred in our state. The Ohio Supreme Court, in a 4-3 ruling, declared this gerrymandering unconstitutional and has requested a re-submission that has not been received. Because of this, incumbents only need to worry about primaries, which we know are dominated by hard-core partisans. The most gerrymandered states in our country are North Carolina, Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Utah, Texas, Arkansas, and Ohio. 80% of the most gerrymandered states in our country are proposing and passing the most extreme anti-trans bills. Out of this list, only Maryland and Pennsylvania are still safe for trans people. I emphasize trans people because the rhetoric and language used in this bill makes it blatantly obvious that the proponents of this bill are not seeking to "protect children". They are trying to prevent transgender children from becoming transgender adults. Representative Click is also the sponsor of HB 113, designating the 12th day of March as "de-trans awareness day". I could not find any defense explanation for this bill, but the name says everything we need to know. Representative Click does not want anyone to be trans.

We can see that Gary Click has no respect for trans identities, misgendering a trans girl publicly on his Twitter. He responds to an interview with her mother, intentionally ignoring the mother's actual statement, where she states that her daughter transitioned socially at the age of 5. She goes on to say that this transition included things such as growing her hair out, changing her name, and wearing dresses. She specifically states that there was no medical intervention at age 5. This is the transition Mr. Click calls, "Not a best practice! No scientific evidence. Unethical medical practices." Again, intentionally misleading his audience to further his anti-trans rhetoric. Representative Click has also said that "science does not evolve". I understand why he would

believe this, considering his position as a pastor and not a scientist. But as I learned from my Biological Anthropology professor, science is constantly evolving.

Regardless of my opinion based on empirical research, it is difficult for me as a constituent to trust that the sponsor and proponents of this bill have the best interest of children in mind. In his opening statement, Mr. Click incorrectly identified the meaning of TERF. Describing them as lesbians, which is inaccurate, and not bothering to even include what it stands for: Trans Exclusionary Feminists. TERFs are women who refuse to recognize trans women as women. As an active member of the queer community and educated in queer theory, I have had personal experiences with TERFs, who are most often self-identified and loudly hateful. There are entire communities of self-proclaimed TERFs who attempt, as their name suggests, to push the trans community out of civil rights conversations. He also talks positively of the “LGB Alliance”, noticeably missing the “T” for trans. Again, trying to push trans people from their own community, from visibility, from existence. Notice how each of these groups have nothing to do with the risks of a young transition. They are simply against all trans people. Marsha P. Johnson, a black trans woman was the first to throw the brick at Stonewall. Marsha threw that brick in the hopes that people like her would not have to fight for the right to exist. Now, here we are, 60 years later, seeing a sudden uptake of direct attacks against trans people. I am incredibly alarmed by this bill, as we’ve seen in other states, such as Florida, what follows is a ban on all gender-affirming care. As a member of the LGBT community, I will fight for all of my community, and this bill needs to stop here.