

Hello,

My name is Pamela. I would like to talk to you about my journey with Gender Affirming Care and why I am pleading with you NOT to pass House Bill 68. I am a mother of 3 amazing boys and have been a Labor and Delivery nurse in Cincinnati for the past 10 years. My youngest son is transgender. I would like to share our journey with you.

I was in the middle of a nasty divorce with the father of my children. My son came out to me during that time. He was 11 years old. I thought it was a cry for attention at first because of the divorce. I blew it off and continued to try to hold things together the best I could and keep the roof over our head and food on the table. I started my children in therapy during this time because of the divorce. During one of the sessions, the therapist came out and said she was concerned that my son was going to hurt himself. He was placed in inpatient care. The doctors and psychiatrists said he was struggling with body dysphoria, and they referred us to the transgender clinic at Cincinnati Children's hospital. It was then that I realized this was really the situation and he wasn't just saying this for attention. I took him to the appointment. We met with a Doctor and social worker at that first appointment. I had so many questions. They were patient and answered all of my questions. They talked about binders and how to safely wear them and showed us the proper way to measure for a correct fit. I was on board with all the treatments except the hormones. I told them I didn't want to give him testosterone until I did some research on it. I was also worried that maybe he would change his mind and I was worried that some things would be irreversible if we started it. As a nurse, I was researching everything. I was talking to the doctors that I work with and asking them questions. We were going bi-weekly to therapy and every 3 months to the clinic. As time passed, the doctors and therapist recommended testosterone, and both felt it would help him. I fought it some more saying "I just need to research a little longer. I don't want to give something to my child that could hurt him or that he would regret later. I don't know enough about it." Then at age 14 he tried to take his life. He took a handful of pills. He ended up in ICU with heart block and acute kidney failure. I hope none of you have to experience seeing your child laying in the hospital in ICU hooked up to IVs and heart monitors. I felt like I was punched in the gut. Here I was thinking I was protecting my child by not letting him take hormones. I was wrong. I was very wrong. After his stay there, we continued to go to therapy and the clinic. He started testosterone injections shortly after being released from the hospital. My son is now a happy 16-year-old boy with big plans for the future. He is popular with the kids at school. He loves to work. He was President of the GSA club at school before the school stopped the afterschool programs. He does the open mic every week at our local coffee shop. I still can't believe the change I have seen in him. Before starting him on the testosterone, he was quiet and withdrawn, so I was able to see a significant change in him. He is still followed closely by the doctors, nurses, and social workers at the clinic, and he still goes to therapy bi-weekly.

I believe that gender affirming care saved my son's life. I believe if HB-68 is passed, we will lose a lot of children to suicide that you say you are trying to protect. I felt like I was protecting my child by denying the hormones, and I came very close to losing him. As parents, we try to do the right thing. I can tell you as a medical professional and a mother, passing this bill will be

dangerous for our kids! It will kill them. I am already trying to figure out where we are going to move if this bill passes. I know many other parents are worried about the same thing. You would be losing good people from the community that would move out of state to be able to continue to receive the care their child needs to stay alive. The children who are in care are closely followed by doctors, therapists, endocrinologists, and other medical professionals. They don't just pass the medication out like candy. I feel medical decisions should be made by medical professionals, parents, and the child, NOT by the government.