



Public Health Policy Committee
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June 14, 2023

RE: HB 68 "SAFE" act or the trans youth medical ban - *oppositional testimony*

Dear Hon. Chair Lipps and respected Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to address you on this important issue. My name is Ginger Williams, my pronouns are she/her, and I have the pleasure to serve on the Board of Directors of TransOhio: Ohio's first state-wide transgender equality organization.

Founded in 2005, TransOhio is a 501(C)(3) comprised entirely of volunteers dedicated to education, advocacy, support, and providing community to trans people and their allies. TransOhio unequivocally opposes restricting access to medical care based on a patient's "transgender status" or "biological sex." Under HB68, the best interest of a minor transgender patient is irrelevant so long as they do not receive any treatment that is gender-affirming. The consent or wishes of the parents are also irrelevant. And worse, it doesn't matter if the patient had already started a course of treatment: they would be required to stop, despite the resulting negative side effects including mental anguish and increased potential for additional medical interventions later in life that could have been avoided by following best practices. Any Ohio physician would be guilty of a crime if he or she recommended a referral out-of-state, which is common practice for speciality care.

It should be noted though, that nonconsensual, irreversible surgeries on intersex infants, toddlers, and children are not affected by this bill. The use of puberty-blockers for cisgender children with precocious puberty (which is on the rise, but is still a population smaller than trans and non-binary youth) is not affected. This bill specifically targets trans youth by implying that being transgender is "the real harm." We assure you, it is not. There are already too many anecdotal stories told by trans, non-binary, and gender nonconforming people in Ohio about how they were mistreated in a medical context. This bill will not just encourage mistreatment; it will require it. Despite WPATH standards of care, area best practices, and the guidance of every single major medical association in the United States, medical professionals in Ohio will be *unable* to treat transgender patients. This will have a devastating effect on countless families.

Doctors should not be restricted by the state legislature. They are the experts in their fields, and they have been providing gender-affirming care to transgender, intersex, and cisgender youth in



Ohio for decades. A reminder that gender-affirming care is any medical care that takes into account the patient's gender and does not seek to undermine or alter it.

Gender-Affirming Care is a collaborative effort with trans individuals through a number of interventions (social, legal, medical, behavioral, surgical) designed to holistically address their well-being through peer involved processes to:

- improve social, psychological, behavioral, and medical health,
- provide respectful support and affirmation of their self-attested gender identity,
- ensure inclusion and use of trauma-informed and harm reduction principles, and
- provide a welcoming, inviting health care setting, regardless of size of practice, in conjunction with their doctors and their personal support system.

Gender-affirming care is common practice for cisgender people, and it should be for trans people as well. Ohio has some of the best medical care in the nation, to deny that care is cruel. We urge you to **vote no**. *Stand up for patient rights.*

Respectfully submitted,
TransOhio Board of Directors