

Good Morning Chairman Lipps and Ranking Member Liston. My name is Kathleen Bates and I am writing in opposition to House Bill 68, the ban on gender affirming care for minors in Ohio. I am a teacher, a parent, and a person of faith, and I know children of all ages whose gender identity does not conform to their sex assigned at birth. Our job as adults who guide children as they grow is to help them become healthy, independent adults. This means we must love them enough to allow them to grow into the person they are, not the person we think they are going to be. This might mean that we support them when they tell us that they don't want to play hockey anymore, they want to try cooking classes, even though we've spent several years and thousands of dollars on hockey. This might mean that we support them as they drop out of medical school to go to art school, even though we've already spent years and thousands of dollars on medical school. Or, this might mean that we support them when they tell us they are non-binary, or trans, even though we've spent years treating them as a boy or a girl. Growing up is not easy for any child, and it is harder for children who do not fit neatly into the boxes that society place them in. Imagine telling a near-sighted child that they cannot wear glasses and must grow up unable to clearly see the world around them, because "God made them this way, and God doesn't make mistakes." Imagine telling a deaf child that they cannot wear hearing aids for the same reason. This bill would take away the care that allows non-cisgender children to successfully negotiate their lives. This includes making it harder to access the mental health care these children often so desperately need. Trans, gender non-conforming, and LGBTQIA children are more likely have anxiety and depression and to consider suicide than their gender conforming peers, yet this bill will ban care givers ability to give them the resources they need to deal with these issues. Our job as the people who love and guide our children is to help them grow into their truest selves, and this bill takes away the rights of parents and care givers to give their children the gender affirming care they need and deserve.