

## Opponent Testimony for HB-68

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am one of the trans kids whose medical care you're discussing today. I just turned 17 and I've identified as a trans boy for four years now.

I have not been able to medically transition, nor have any of my trans friends. I have watched them struggle with parents that don't respect their identity and simply be forced to wait until their 18th birthday for the possibility of treatment, and even then there is a large wait for gender affirming care. I am currently a part of this "waiting game" because my parents do not support me; this is life for most trans youth. We celebrate our wins, though; one of my friends turned 18 a few months ago and got his first testosterone shot days ago. This is a beautiful moment for us: the culmination of years of longing, to feel like our brain finally belongs in our body, to take that first shot and know that it's over.

I cannot imagine the repercussions of ripping that away from all Ohio children, regardless of their situation. Gender dysphoria is distressing and when left untreated and unaffirmed, will almost certainly result in depressive or anxious symptoms. To ban gender affirming care for those with comorbid mental health disorders is a thinly veiled ban on transitioning all together: it will, in effect, bar nearly all trans people from receiving the care that they need. This barbaric implication that people with mental illness are not worthy of autonomy is shocking and a large government overreach. Where does it stop? I have personally refused diagnostic assessments because of these laws, and I'm unsure if I'm getting the mental health treatment I need because I'm scared to receive a diagnosis that will eventually interfere with me transitioning, something that I know will bring me so much joy and peace and that's necessary for me to thrive.

Many children know from a very young age that they're trans; to force them to wait over a decade to receive any care is to force them through a traumatizing puberty and subject them to a meaningless struggle. Only 1-3% of people regret transitioning. The process of getting on HRT takes about a year, and it's unlikely for any sort of 'whim' to last that long. For many trans youth, they are on puberty blockers until age 16, which are completely reversible. This typically means years of monitored treatment before HRT is actually administered. In Ohio, no one under 18 receives gender-affirming surgery. This means trans youth can only receive puberty blockers and HRT, two absolutely integral medical interventions that are only prescribed when children are consistent and both parents are in agreement with the treatment. There is no "experimentation"; I have fought long and hard to override my parents' medical consent to start testosterone for a year and a half in foster care. I have a guardian ad litem who drafted a motion, even—and it was rejected. There are no children being experimented on; the children who *need* this care aren't even getting it.

Please, don't make it any harder. Hearing about these laws has crushed me. I fear for the lives of my trans brothers and sisters and I hope for a time where we are liberated, loved, and supported. To ban transition is to ban trans people; the overarching goal seems to be for us to be forced to live as our birth genders longer, in hopes that we will change our minds. However, for most trans people, living that way causes immense mental distress and suicidal ideation.

And for most trans youth, we have enough bigotry and hatred to deal with outside the realms of healthcare and legislation. I know that I would never have made it this far without hope that I'll be transitioning soon, and finally uncover all the love and joy for my trans body. I can't imagine how wonderful it will be to finally see myself, for others to see me, and to have this weight lifted off my shoulders so I can just be authentically myself.

Please, don't move forward with HB-68. My life and the lives of every trans youth in Ohio are in your hands.