

My name is Kara Butlien-Cohen, and as a transgender educator, I stand in opposition to Ohio House Bill 68. Although I write this testimony as an individual, I am amplifying the voices of my transgender and gender nonconforming students and for all of the LGBTQ+ students in Ohio. This legislation seeks to prohibit minors from accessing gender-affirming care, including puberty-blocking hormones, therapy, and surgeries, which can significantly improve their quality of life.

The bill ignores the fact that gender dysphoria is a medical condition recognized by the American Medical Association and the World Health Organization. Banning gender-affirming care disregards the medical needs of transgender youth who often experience high levels of distress related to puberty and the development of secondary sex characteristics that do not align with their gender identity.

Ohio House Bill 68 bans gender-affirming care, including surgery, for minors is misinformed and misguided. Simply it completely disregards the bodily autonomy and the well being of transgender children. It would prohibit transgender minors from accessing healthcare that could significantly improve their quality of life. The bill also completely disregards the expertise and recommendations of medical professionals in favor of political ideology. When did opinions by politicians matter more than the experts? Doctors, physicians, therapists, know what is best for transgender and gender nonconforming minors who struggle. The politicians are wrong. They have little to no understanding in these matters for all they care about is dictating laws that have no impact on them. **DO NOT CLAIM TO BE THE EXPERT!**

As someone who transitioned later in life, I am fortunate to have access to gender-affirming care that has helped me live more authentically. Even then, I felt the torment that these children now feel of not being aligned from a psychological standpoint. I also experienced a large amount of depression and anxiety because I knew I was not meant to be a man, but a woman. Yes, for those who also know me, I have also contemplated extreme measures of self harm. It pains me to think of what it would have been like if I didn't have access to the care that I needed. Transgender minors deserve the same access to healthcare that I had, and denying them this care can have disastrous consequences.

If Ohio House Bill 68 were passed, medical professionals who defy the ban and provide gender-affirming care to minors could face severe penalties such as fines, loss of license, open to being sued, and potential jail time. This would create an environment of fear and intimidation for healthcare providers, further limiting access to healthcare for transgender youth. Additionally, what no one talks about is that the newly created fear and intimidation would turn away individuals who potentially wanted to work in health care further compounding the shortage.

One final point of food for thought is how does this bill coincide with Christianity. Representative Gary Click and other members of the Ohio House of Representatives argue that transgender and other gender nonconforming people break from Biblical ideology. But I ask specifically this question to Representative Click, Does Christianity teach you to love your

neighbors as yourself? This is not love. This is hatred. By using the Bible and Christian Doctrine to justify someone's existence, we are saying that these people are subhuman. I am sub human. Does our dignity not matter to you? These restrictions come from misinformation and will lead to hate, anger, mainstream degradation, and potentially violence. What gives you this right to marginalize the LGBTQ+ community? Where have I seen this happen before?

In conclusion, Ohio House Bill 68 disregards the medical needs and autonomy of transgender minors and can have harmful effects on their mental and physical well-being. It is crucial to support and advocate for the access of transgender youth to gender-affirming care. As a transgender educator, I urge lawmakers to take a stand for the rights of transgender youth and vote against this harmful legislation. A no vote on Ohio House Bill 68 is a vote for the health and well-being of transgender youth in Ohio.