

House Bill 68

Opponent Testimony

Ohio House of Representatives, Public Health Policy Committee

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Individual Psychiatrist

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Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Public Health Committee:

I am submitting testimony today against House Bill 68. I am an individual psychiatrist and current psychiatric resident, and I plan to work as a child and adolescent psychiatrist in the future. Gender-affirming care is standard of care and is evidence-based for the treatment of gender dysphoria in young people. Treatment of gender dysphoria in all people, including young people, is crucial for mental health. If passed, HB 68 would result in worsening mental health for young people in the state of Ohio.

Gender diverse young people face many obstacles, including discrimination and stigma. As a result, they are at increased risk for mental health issues, substance use, and suicide. As a psychiatrist, I work every day to improve these outcomes for my transgender and nonbinary patients. A safe and affirming community improves outcomes for transgender and nonbinary young people. Gender-affirming care that would be banned by HB 68 can improve mental health and decrease suicidal ideation, which is so important in a time when mental health care is so needed in the state of Ohio. HB 68 would ban healthcare that is critical to treat gender dysphoria and is accepted by the medical community as standard of care. HB 68 would demonstrate that the state of Ohio is neither safe nor affirming for transgender and nonbinary young people, resulting in worsening mental health for this community.

This bill is not just detrimental to patients, but also to their families and their providers. HB 68 interferes with a family's right to make medical decisions that should only involve their medical providers, not their government. This is disheartening to me as a young physician still in training. I will be choosing where to practice in the future. Why should I or other psychiatrists currently in training or in our early careers choose to practice in Ohio if our legislators will not allow us to use our expertise to care for our patients as we have been trained? If HB 68 is passed, we would even be punished for providing the standard of care to our transgender young patients. This would result in worsening burnout for physicians and mental healthcare providers. HB 68 is an example of grave legislative overreach and would negatively impact many young people, families, physicians, and mental health care practitioners in the state of Ohio.

Gender-affirming care is evidence-based and necessary for improving mental health. I have seen this both in the medical literature and with my own patients. I have also seen that HB 68 sends a message to transgender people in the state of Ohio that they are not welcome here. This is disturbing to me as both a psychiatrist and citizen. I urge you to vote no to HB 68. Thank you for your time.