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Dear Senator Brenner and Members of the Ohio State Senate,

Hello, my name is Cole Campos, MSW, LSW, and I use they/them pronouns. I'm writing to oppose House Bill 8, the "Parents Bill of Rights". This bill would require many clinical professionals, including social workers, to go against our Code of Ethics regarding a client's right to privacy. Additionally, the Ohio Revised Code, the Ohio Counselor and Social Worker Board, and the NASW Code of Ethics already have best practice structures built into our practice to protect confidentiality and engage their families when it is in the best interest of the young person. There is no need to further ostracize young people by requiring all of their confidential information to be shared with their parents/guardians at any point in their care. Not only is this unethical, it's extremely dangerous for our LGBTQ+ young people who may then experience abuse from caretakers after having their potential gender identity and/or sexuality outed without their consent. Parents/guardians do not have a right to every detail about their young person, as they are a human with a right to privacy regardless of their age.

As previously mentioned, the social worker's Code of Ethics states that there is a baseline of respect for a client's right to privacy, protection of that confidential information, and that information should only be shared when appropriate AND with valid consent from a client. It also notes that disclosure should include the least amount of confidential information necessary and should only be information that is directly relevant to the purpose for which the disclosure is made. This is all done for the safety and wellbeing of our clients, including young people. They have the right to privacy and confidentiality when seeking support and care. It also is important to note, that parents do already have a right to request treatment records for mental health care. Additionally, youth under 14 are not supposed to be provided mental health treatment without parental consent and children 14 and older are not supposed to receive services over 6 sessions/30 days (whichever comes first) without parental consent.

If this bill were to pass, we would see less young people disclosing issues either at home or at school, as they would assume it would need to be shared with their parents/guardians. There will be a rise in untreated mental illness, self harm, and death as a result of not having the privacy and confidentiality that is necessary to treat youth who are struggling. Young people are valid in their experiences and concerns that require a level of privacy with a trusted adult, like a teacher or school social worker, as there is probably a reason that the parent/guardian is not told. Do not pass House Bill 8.

Sincerely,

Cole Campos, MSW, LSW