

Opponent Testimony, HB 68
Senate Government Oversight Committee
December 6, 2023

Chair Roegner, Vice-Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Government Oversight Committee, thank you for your consideration of the following.

My initials are L.E. and I am a licensed social worker in the State of Ohio. I am testifying today to express my personal opposition to HB 68 as a social worker, mental health care provider, member of the LGBT+ community, and individual.

I have personally provided mental health treatment for many individuals who have received gender affirming care, both as youth and as adults. Many of those individuals struggle with a variety of mental illnesses, one of which being gender dysphoria actively being treated by gender affirming care. Gender affirming care has been demonized in the media, with many outlets using scare-tactics to further stigmatize transgender and gender-queer individuals, which has caused confusion and fear in the minds of many Ohioans.

As a mental health provider, gender affirming care looks like validating a scared teenager who does not feel safe telling anyone else. Gender affirming care looks like celebrating coming out to family. Gender affirming care looks like discussing what it means to be masculine or feminine in a group of growing adolescents. Gender affirming care looks like helping a youth reflect on their feelings regarding having had a surgery that “made” them a female after being born intersex. Gender affirming care is a necessary part of mental health treatment, and HB 68 would prevent mental health professionals from performing a vital aspect of their job when working with youth.

Gender affirming care is life-saving. I fear that when many individuals hear that term, they are able to maintain ignorance to what that actually means. 50% of transgender youth have attempted suicide and over 80% of transgender youth have considered suicide [1]. Gender affirming care prevents suicide.

With the above in mind, I am respectfully requesting a “no” vote on HB 68 in order to ensure ethical social work practice within the state of Ohio and to save the lives of many transgender youth.

Thank you for your consideration,
L.E., MSW LSW

[1] Austin, A., Craig, S. L., D'Souza, S., & McInroy, L. B. (2022). Suicidality Among Transgender Youth: Elucidating the Role of Interpersonal Risk Factors. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 37(5-6), NP2696–NP2718. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520915554>