

December 3, 2023

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Government Oversight Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to House Bill 68. My name is Carmen Kahlo and I am the mother of a transgender 8 year old and we are residents of Lakewood in Cuyahoga County.

We just moved to Lakewood, Ohio from California in August of 2022. We moved to Lakewood to be somewhere affordable, beautiful, diverse, and liberal. We also have an 8-year-old and so the great Lakewood schools were also a reason we moved here.

This year, our child told us she was transgender (although she didn't use that word, because as she told me "I didn't know there was a name for who I am!"). There were signs for years before, and she did say in the past "I feel like I'm a girl inside!", but this year was her "coming out." But prior to coming out, there were months of severe anxiety and depression. After coming out, she reached peace and joy and finally felt like she could be herself. She attends a loving and supportive school, and we couldn't ask for a better school district. Lakewood City Schools are known as one of the most supportive school districts for LGBTQ+ students, and we're grateful that this is where we landed.

Soon after her coming out I found out about House Bill 68. My daughter has a wonderful, caring, and accepting gender affirming therapist whom she has been seeing for 6 months. In January she will meet her gender affirming endocrinologist just to establish care for if or when we decide to go that route. The idea of this all ending without us having a choice in the medical care for our own child keeps me up at night. I have been living with constant regret and guilt about moving here.

Now that we know about House Bill 68 we are left with only one choice if it passes: move away from Lakewood, Ohio, the city and state we now call home. We love Lakewood. Our daughter loves her school and her friends. We love our home. We are entrepreneurs and have a home-based insurance business here, providing quality financial products for Ohioans, but we will leave Ohio in order to live happily and freely. Our US Constitution promised us we have the right to be free and happy, but we will need to find that in a neighboring state if this bill passes. All our dreams for our child's future in Ohio are dying with this cruel bill.

Also, our daughter is the only trans girl who plays on the girls' soccer team. And despite what this bill proposes, she's not the best one on the team. There are many girls who are far better than she is. She just loves soccer and loves playing with her friends. Again, this bill would snatch her away from the only soccer teammates and coaches she's known because she is seen as a threat. She is not a threat. She's a transgender kid who loves soccer.

I implore you to vote no on House Bill 68 and I urge you to support policies that uphold the rights and dignity of transgender individuals, ensure their access to necessary healthcare, and allow them to participate in sports consistent with their gender identity.

I thank you for your consideration,

Carmen Kahlo