

Opponent Testimony HB 68  
Government Oversight Committee

Chair Roegner, Vice-Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

My name is Elizabeth Rieger, and I am a licensed independent social worker. I have 42 years of experience working directly with people in this field. I have worked as a medical social worker, as a school social worker in the elementary school settings, and currently as a private clinician since 2012. I am testifying today in opposition to HB 68. If passed, HB 68 would have a devastating impact on transgender, and gender diverse youth in Ohio. It would also make it impossible for clinical social workers, like myself, to practice ethically, and uphold our social work code of ethics as defined by the National Association of Social Workers.

Gender-affirming care is considered best-practice for transgender and gender diverse youth. It is supported by the National Association of Social Workers, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Medical Association. In a Psychology Today article titled “The Evidence for Trans Youth Gender-Affirming Care”, Jack Turban MD, MHS summarizes 16 studies done worldwide with trans youth. The research indicates that gender-affirming care results in favorable mental health outcomes. \* The Trevor Project 2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People reports that nearly 1 in 3 LGBTQ youth said their mental health was poor most of the time or always due to anti-LGBTQ policies or legislation. \*\* HB 68, if passed, will likely see those dramatic statistics worsen.

HB 68 would add an additional consent for behavioral health treatment from parents, risking the youth being “outed”, which could pose a serious risk to the youth’s mental health and safety. There are already regulations in place for providing behavioral health to minors, including consent from parents. HB 68, if passed, would be discriminatory by asking for additional consents for treatment of LGBTQ young people.

\*Psychology Today (January 2022) Retrieved May 22,2023 from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/political-minds/202201/the-evidence-trans-youth-gender-affirming-medical-care>

\*\*The Trevor Project 2023 U.S. National Survey on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People (2023) Retrieved May 20, 2023 from <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2023/#discriminated-by-region>

As a social worker, I am guided in my daily interactions with clients by the ethical principles of my profession. Those ethical principles are service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationship, integrity, and competence. I am opposed to HB 68 because each and every one of the ethical principles that has guided me through my 42-year career would be compromised. As a social worker, I am charged with the responsibility to “do no harm”. I would no longer be able to uphold my ethical principles or the mandate to “do no harm” should this legislation move forward.

In addition to my career as a social worker, I am strongly opposed to HB 68 because I am the proud sister of a trans woman. My sister, who recently retired from a forty plus year career as an engineer working as a manager, came out to me when she was 57 years old. She shared with me that she knew as a very young child that she was not in the correct body, but she lived for 57 years feeling she might never live as her true self. I had the honor and privilege of being one of my sister’s support persons during her affirmation surgery. The morning after surgery, my sister said to me “last night, I was remembering when Dad was the same age as me, we were all with him in his hospital room”. She went on to say “his life was ending, and I realized that my life is just beginning”. I will never forget those powerful words, and I ask each of you to think about my sister’s words as you vote on HB 68. Please think about the young people, who like my sister, want to live as their true selves. HB 68 will make it very difficult, if not impossible for transgender and gender diverse youth to believe they can live as their authentic selves.

It is the ethical obligation of my profession, and should be the ethical obligation of our state legislators to make our state a safe and judgement free space for LGBTQ citizens, and that includes transgender and gender diverse youth.

As a social worker and as a sister of a trans woman, I ask you to consider my testimony opposing HB 68, and vote no.

Thank you, again, for this opportunity to testify. I would be very happy to answer any questions. You can reach me at [liz@lizrieger.com](mailto:liz@lizrieger.com) and my phone number is 937-203-8141

Respectfully submitted,  
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