

I am an Ohio native and am raising three kids, the youngest of which is a trans girl. Anyone who has ever spent time around a preschooler knows that at a certain point they know their gender. My older two kids pretty quickly affirmed themselves as the gender we thought they were, but though we thought our youngest was a boy, from the age of about 3 or 3 1/2 she would say "I wish I was a girl" or "I feel like a girl" when this topic came up. She was aware others regarded her as a boy, but persisted in saying she felt like a girl. We gave this some time to see if maybe she'd eventually start seeing herself as a boy, but it didn't happen and she got more emphatic about feeling like a girl and wanting to wear dresses. So ultimately we helped her transition at the age of 6. We discussed a variety of options, everything from being a girl all the time, to just some of the time, to being "a boy who likes to wear dresses and has long hair". She wanted to choose a girl name, to be called "she", and to be a girl all the time. So that's what we did. She hadn't seemed to us like an unhappy kid before, but after others were able to see her as her true self, and she was able to wear the clothes she wanted to, she blossomed and has been happier and more talkative. She has not reached puberty yet, and all that is done for kids this young is a change in clothes, hairstyles, names, and pronouns. There is no medical intervention done at this age, and any rhetoric about surgeries and hormones for young children is entirely inaccurate.

We don't know what she will feel and want in the future. Many trans people know their identity at this young age and it persists into adulthood, and we think this will happen with her, but of course if she changes her mind, she can go back to her "boy" identity, and we would support her if that happened. When she reaches puberty, there are medical options available to ensure she doesn't have to go through male puberty if she doesn't want to. A lot of people are up in arms about teens having access to puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones, and these treatments have pros and cons. The alternative, going through puberty as their birth sex, is a really upsetting process for many trans preteens and teens, and makes permanent unwanted changes to their bodies. Let us please bear in mind here that in any medical situation, all treatments have their pros and cons, and that the choice of "doing nothing" and letting puberty continue also has its own set of pros and cons. Most trans adults wish they had not had to go through puberty as the wrong gender. When we are treating trans teens and preteens, we have the choice to stop this process if that is what everyone involved decides is the best course of action, but not if Ohio decides they know better than us what our choice should be.

Obviously, as parents we only want the best for our child. When this time comes for our daughter, we want to be able to work with her and her doctors to find the best medical course of action for her. Maybe she will choose medical intervention and maybe she won't, but the choice should be made by her and us and her medical team. Unfortunately, HB 68 wants to get in the middle of this very personal decision for trans teens in Ohio, and subject them all to one-size-fits-all medicine imposed by non-doctors and based on politics, rather than science. Our teenagers deserve better. They deserve to be allowed to decide for themselves what is best, with the help of their parents and doctors. This bill isn't protecting kids--it's making their lives more difficult and blocking their ability to get psychological and medical help with their gender and transitioning. I urge the Ohio legislature to protect medical options for kids like my daughter by voting NO on HB68.