

***Opponent Testimony for Senate Government Oversight Committee***

***Wednesday, December 6, 2023***

***Greg Martin***

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Antani, and members of the Government Oversight Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present the following testimony regarding HB 68. As background, I am a 61-year old straight white male. I attended Catholic schools – all in Ohio - from kindergarten through my graduation from John Carroll. I have historically voted Republican because the Republican party I used to know focused on big picture things like fiscal responsibility and individual rights and freedoms. I have five children and three step children. One of my children is transgender. It's not something she chose – it's just who she is. Because she is the person she is and because I love her, I've spent time trying to learn more so I can support her fully.

Denying transgender children the right, in conjunction with their parents and health care providers, to make medical related decisions about their bodies feels Big Brother-ish. It is as if the State is forcing these children to be who the State wants them to be rather than who they really are.

The point proponents of this bill seem to be missing is that this care is not cosmetic or elective. Hormone therapy, puberty blockers, and supportive mental health counseling are medically necessary for these individuals. Research is clear that mental health outcomes are significantly more favorable among people with gender dysphoria who receive gender affirming care than those who don't. And this is why major medical bodies including the American Medical Association, The American Academy of Pediatrics, and The American Psychiatric Association oppose bans on gender affirming care.

I suspect most, if not all, of the bill's proponents have vocally denounced mandatory Covid vaccines, citing the "it's up to the individual" argument. I wonder why they don't take the same position in this case? I also wonder if any of the proponents have spent meaningful time with a transgender kid. Time to truly try to understand what that kid is going through and why – in their words – it would be devastating for the State to deny them the care they need to live.

HB 68 also contains language regarding the participation of transgender individuals in sports and I'll be respectful of your time by not addressing it here. OHSAA has already tackled this one and their policy is crystal clear. They are the experts and we should honor their expert decision. What's next, will the Senate ask to have final say over pass interference or holding calls?

In conclusion, the decision to pursue gender affirming care should be made by the minor, their family, and their healthcare providers. And their treatment plan should be tailored to the individual rather than dictated by the State. Please do the right thing and don't let HB 68 get beyond this Committee.

Thank you.