

December 6, 2023

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Ty, my pronouns are he/they, and I am a licensed social worker, law student, and resident of Cleveland. I am strongly opposed to HB 68.

Efforts across the country to "out" students and children are deeply saddening and out of touch with the electorate. The fear of rejection from parents is common among LGBTQ+ adolescents, and HB 68's requirement to receive consent from both parents to treat a minor for gender-affirming cases would force mental health providers to "out" adolescents. This is concerning, given that LGBTQ+ adolescents are more than four times as likely to consider and attempt suicide, and this legislation could exacerbate this disparity. As an adolescent, I personally experienced a stark difference in support between my parents, and undoubtedly, only one parent would have consented to my treatment had HB 68 been the law of the land. I personally struggle with co-occurring mental health conditions, which are exacerbated by the toxic stress of navigating my gender identity and sexual orientation. Had I received gender-affirming therapy as an adolescent, my mental health would have undoubtedly improved. Finally, my academic experience in Ohio public schools was anything but affirming. HB 68's provisions dehumanizing individuals' gender identities in sports would only marginalize and effectively further enshrine government-sponsored disparate treatment of LGBTQ+ adolescents.

HB 68 would create separate rules for mental health providers to follow when carrying out care with gender non-conforming clients, thereby requiring providers to discriminate. Moreover, the more restrictive rules could create an undue burden on providers, which is surprising given the libertarian nature of the legislature. Additionally, the bill would require consent from both parents to provide a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, an apparent usurpation of clinical care by the legislature. As provided by the Ohio Revised Code, mental health professionals are permitted to make a diagnosis. In no training or ethical consideration have I been required to obtain consent from both parents to make a diagnosis; rather, I have been trained to honor the adolescent client's confidentiality while also obtaining consent to treat from one parent and updating them as required by law or based on my professional judgment. Finally, I encourage you to consider major medical associations' endorsements of the evidence-based healthcare that this bill aims to proscribe.

I hope this committee will consider evidence from major medical associations, and the pleas from Ohioans to make this a more inclusive state. I implore you to consider my testimony and vote no on this harmful bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Tyler ("Ty") Coy, MSW, LSW