



December 4, 2023

Members of the Senate Government Oversight Committee and House Public Health Policy Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Amanda Kostura. I am a Licensed Independent Social Worker Supervisor, and Founder & President of Carve Your Own Path. Our organization provides crucial and necessary mental health counseling services and supports for marginalized and oppressed individuals in Ohio. I am strongly opposed of HB 68.

A large percentage of our clients served are part of the LGBTQIA+ population, and trans and nonbinary individuals specifically seek out care with our organization due to our gender and identity affirming care approaches. These folks have been ostracized, disenfranchised, discriminated against, and harmed physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and more by their own families, communities, housing providers, healthcare providers, and their own government who is meant to represent them.

We know through peer reviewed research and evidence based-approaches that providing access to gender-affirming care, including mental health care, is crucial to not only improving the quality of life for transgender and nonbinary individuals, but LIFE-SAVING. Transgender people experience higher rates of suicide attempts. According to The Trevor Project's 2020 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health, 54% of young people who identified as transgender or nonbinary reported having seriously considered suicide in the last year, and 29% have attempted to end their lives. Accessing gender-affirming care has been shown to decrease rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal attempts.

Our clients regularly inform us how terrified they are for their safety, especially with pending legislation to remove their access to healthcare and other basic human rights. We are proud to stand with the trans and nonbinary community in their fight for access to evidence-based healthcare, and fear criminalization of our practice and impact on our licensure should this legislation pass.

I ask that you take my testimony into consideration and support this life-saving bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Kostura', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Amanda Kostura, LISW-S
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