

**Opponent testimony for House Bill 68
12/06/2023**

**Abigail Lloyd
Representing self**

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Atani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of Government Oversight Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Abby, and I am an eighteen-year-old university student here in Columbus. This is the week of final exams, but I have chosen to miss class and cut my study time short to be here today. I am here on behalf of my best friend. Her name is Corinne; she is sixteen, a brilliant student and musician, and the kindest person I know. She cannot be here today because the lawmakers of this country have made it dangerous for her to exist as herself in public. I can't tell you her story, but I can tell you what I see when I look at my friend.

From the moment I met her, I was attracted to her in a way I can't explain. She always covered her face and wore her hair down, and her androgynous clothing and painted nails suggested a daring sort of gender enigma. I later learned that, although she didn't always show it, she was very afraid—that the reason she covered her face was because she was scared to show herself. In her own time, she came out to our school as a transgender girl. To me, she was the same Corinne, with the same nerdy interests, and kind heart, and ability to make us laugh until our guts hurt. But then she changed.

Over the course of almost two years now, I have seen my best friend's true spirit emerge. Physically she has changed—she grew her hair out, started wearing the clothes and makeup she wanted, and indulging in all the aspects of girlhood that she was previously denied. But what I noticed more than those physical changes was a change in the way she held herself. Once she stopped hiding who she was, her true confidence and self-love began to emerge, and it gave her a glow I can only describe as true femininity. To be yourself in the face of all opposition and every voice telling you that you are doing it wrong—to me, there is no experience more womanly than that.

Watching my best friend find her true self over the course of our relationship has been an experience I hold close to my heart. And the agent that made it possible was her medical treatment. At age fifteen she was able to start receiving hormone replacement therapy, including estrogen. It was the physical changes caused by hormones that truly saved her from a world of shame, hiding, and profound self-loathing. The changes in her personality were all thanks to the gender-affirming care she received, and had she not had this medical intervention, I truly do not know if she could have continued living as she was.

Mental illness and suicide is a reality that the transgender community is acutely aware of, perhaps no one more so than me. The same year I met my best friend, my family almost lost my transgender sibling to a suicide attempt. They were only twelve at the time, but already struggling with a myriad of mental health issues, including gender dysphoria. It's not coincidental that around the time my younger sibling

came out as non-binary, changed their name, and started going by they/them pronouns, that their mental state began to improve, and they made a full recovery from suicidal ideation.

For my sibling Eryn, all that was needed to alleviate dysphoria was social and aesthetic changes, such as using the correct name and pronouns, and getting them an affirming haircut. Eryn and their healthcare providers never sought out hormones or medical intervention of any kind, because the fact is that every transgender experience is unique. No therapist or doctor ever told my transgender friends that their only option is gender affirming care, because the entire goal of trans healthcare is to provide transgender kids and their parents with whichever care is right for *their* child.

As a lesbian myself, with a beautiful transgender girlfriend, I cannot stand for a world that will force anyone back into the closet. That is the reality of what this bill will mean for thousands of children across Ohio—forced detransition, a reality so painful that some choose death. To completely strip away the right to lifesaving healthcare from kids like Corinne is to turn Ohio into the next trans graveyard. I watched gender affirming care transform her into the healthy and thriving girl she is today, and now, I live in terror that this will be taken away from her, and that I will lose the person I love so dearly.

For now, Corinne is alive, but this onslaught of anti-trans and gay legislation has taken an incalculable toll on her mental well-being. She carries herself with bravery but confides in me that she is exhausted of fighting for a place in a country which seems so opposed to her existence. She knows that if HB68 becomes law, she will have to uproot her entire life and move states, spending her senior year of high school in search of a place which will treat her like home. It is a choice between leaving everything she knows and loves about this state, or staying, and losing herself again. Either way, I will lose her. I am here today to ask that you reject HB68 and the harm it stands to cause vulnerable youth like Corinne. Please don't take her away from me. I ask that you vote no on HB68, for her. Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions.