

Chair Roegner and Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson,

My name is Rachel Ryan, and I am a mental health professional in the city of Columbus. As a therapist, I serve several children and adolescents in the transgender community and have seen firsthand the damage that laws targeting the transgender community do to the mental and physical health of transgender individuals. Access to gender-affirming care is arguably one of the most important rights that transgender youth deserve to have, and targeting this right will undoubtedly do irreparable damage to many youth in the transgender community and the people who love them.

One particular adolescent I have worked with the past several months stands out as someone who has been harmed by lack of access to gender-affirming care. He has struggled with depression and anxiety for years, as well as a complete lack of self-worth. His frustrations with the mismatch between his body and his identity are brought up in nearly every therapy session and are one of the biggest reasons that he does not feel comfortable going to school. He is consistently misgendered and is uncomfortable in his own skin, making it difficult for him in the school environment. This has led him to opt out of traditional schooling altogether and pursue his GED. Although he could be allowed to pursue medical transition with parental support, he only has support of one legal guardian and not both, which has prevented him from this pursuit. I can't help but wonder where he would be had he been able to obtain this care; I picture him thriving, with many friends, pursuing his artistic abilities. If he is already unable to live to his potential under the current law, I shudder to think how many more children are bound to be similarly impacted by HB 68 should it pass.

Of course, this only applies to the children impacted by this bill that would make it past the age of 18. Research has shown that suicide attempt rates are 40% higher in the transgender population than in the general US population, and that access to gender-affirming care substantially lowers the rate of suicide attempts and anxiety and depression symptoms while substantially increasing positive affect and life satisfaction (Tordoff et al., 2022). Similarly, one study showed that maternal support of the transition of transgender girls as young as 16 resulted in a 63% decrease in suicidal ideation compared to transgender girls without maternal support (Jin et al., 2020). Overall, gender-affirming care is highly lauded as preventative care by The Lancet as well as a collection of over 50 articles compiled by [Cornell University](#), as it has been consistently shown to reduce suicide rates and improve quality of life of transgender youth significantly (Restar, 2023). Without access to gender-affirming care, how many youth will the state of Ohio lose to suicide due to the loss of ability to live as their authentic selves?

For the good of the community and for people like the children and adolescents I work with as a therapist, please vote no on HB68.

Respectfully,

Rachel Ryan, MA

References

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