

HB 68  
Opponent Testimony  
Shannon Winnubst

Chair Roegner, Ranking Member Hicks Hudson and Members of the Government Oversight Committee:

My name is Shannon Winnubst and, as a citizen of Ohio and parent of a teenager, I come here today to entreat all of you to stand up against the ignorance and bigotry that fuel House Bill 68.

In my limited time, I want to emphasize two aspects of this bill that are crucial to oppose: the complete undermining of science and a contemporary race panic.

First, the attack on science—

Despite Representative Click's repeated insistence on drawing on the "best practices" of medical professionals, this entire Bill depends on flawed claims to scientific authority. It displays a blatant disregard for scientific method and the meticulous practices involved in attaining "high quality evidence" that have been the bedrock of modern medicine. The single "expert witness" brought forward by the proponent testimony, André von Mol, claims to be "board certified" through his membership in the Christian Medical and Dental Association. It is clear, however, that he holds actual scientific medical practice in disdain. Rather, he is currently traveling the circuit of conservative state legislatures peddling the transphobic panic that has taken ahold of the nation—or roughly one third of the country, to be sure.

Central to this non-scientific set of claims to medical authority is the theory of "Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria," which was spawned in 2018 by Dr. Lisa Littman in *PlosOne*. First of all, this is not a standard scientific journal: it is a fully online "pay-to-publish" journal that is committed to circulating research, rather than vetting the research's veracity. When Dr. Littman published the article in 2018, the journal issued a post-publication review—a highly unusual academic practice—and then published a revised version of the paper. In this revised article, Dr. Littman clarified the following: "Rapid-onset gender dysphoria (ROGD) is not a formal mental health diagnosis at this time. This report did not collect data from the adolescents and young adults (AYAs) or clinicians and therefore does not validate the phenomenon."<sup>[54]</sup> Let me repeat: "Rapid-onset gender dysphoria is **not a formal mental health diagnosis**"—according to the researcher who coined the phrase.

This HB 68 is not saving anyone from experimentation: it is undermining the very foundations of modern medicine and modern science.

This leads me to my second point: the connection of this bill to a race panic. It is abundantly clear that the bill is driven by the fear of transgender people—more commonly known as transphobia. It is also abundantly clear that this specific fear is related to a broader fear of

lesbians and gay men—more commonly known as homophobia. (This bigotry ultimately aims to undermine the rights and personhood of all lesbians and gay men.) But history also teaches us that this kind of attack on gender and sexual minorities is always a symptom of a race panic: in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a wave of laws regulating the movement and activity of white girls emerged in a clear response to the abolition of slavery; again in the 1940-60s, concerted attacks on “homosexuals” emerged just as WWII brought heightened desegregation efforts into play; and the infamous Anita Bryant claimed to “save the children” from gays and lesbians in 1977 in part of the backlash against Civil Rights progress. We are currently in another intensified race panic. As you consider this bill, please consider where you stand in the ideology of white supremacy.

We are living in tumultuous times: the adolescent mental health crisis caused by the pandemic should incite us to offer greater care and compassion, not this bigoted attempt to legislate quackery in the name of “saving children.” The addition to this version of the Bill to ban trans athletes from participating in sports is a very, very cruel twist that will intensify the mental and physical health crisis facing all our adolescents and children.

Please do not let Ohio become yet another embarrassment of this country: please see this Bill as the part of the bigoted, anti-science ideology attempting to sweep this country and vote “no.”

Thank you.