

Opposition testimony HB 68
December 6, 2023

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and esteemed members of the Ohio State Senate Government Oversight Committee, thank you for affording me the opportunity to present my opposition testimony regarding House Bill 68.

My name is Sage McMillan, I live in Mentor, Ohio, and I am the mother of three; aged 23, 21, and 16. I am here today to express my concerns about how HB 68 will adversely impact my family and emphasize that this bill can only be described undeniably as government overreach into private matters.

First, I would like to share my family story, my youngest child, is transgender. When she was thirteen, I discovered this aspect of her identity by accident when I noticed her phone lock screen had the familiar light blue and pink colors symbolizing the trans community. In a moment of vulnerability, I inquired about the choice of lock screen, prompting a panicked reaction as she hesitated and asked, "What do you think?"

I responded the only way I knew how "I love you, and we will figure this out".

At that moment I was unaware that she had already grappled with her dysphoria for several years, and with hindsight being 20/20, it was clear that I had missed the depression and her withdrawing from things that she enjoyed. I needed to come to terms with my own emotions and seek the best support for her and our family.

The very next day, I reached out to the Cleveland Clinic, initiating a process focused initially on addressing her depression and the challenges posed by her assigned gender. I must express my profound gratitude to the Guide Program at the Cleveland Clinic, whose intervention played a pivotal role in saving my daughter's life. Equally significant was their assistance in helping me comprehend the various levels of affirmative care tailored for different ages, as well as their thoughtful approach to determining when both the youth and the family are ready to progress or perhaps need to take a more deliberate pace.

Currently, my daughter is a Junior and doing much better academically this year than she has in the past, she has joined some clubs and is in a couple of AP classes, and we are lucky she is here and thriving.

If HB 68 passes, I am not sure what we will do. What I do know is the statewide voter initiative 1, The Right to Reproductive Freedom with Protections for Health and Safety, passed because the majority of voters in Ohio believe health care is between a doctor and the patient, and in the case of trans youth in Ohio, you have the patient, the parents, and a team of experts making informed decisions. If HB 68 move out of committee and is approved by the senate, it is another way in which the majority of the legislature in Ohio is out of step with the citizens of Ohio.

I strongly urge you to not let HB 68 pass out of this committee.

My personal story is just one of many that illustrate how critical gender-affirming care plays in the lives of transgender youth and their families. House Bill 68, in its current form, risks undermining the progress and understanding that we, as a family, have painstakingly achieved. It is essential to recognize that these deeply personal decisions are best made in collaboration with healthcare professionals who specialize in the nuanced needs of transgender youth.

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I respectfully urge the committee to reconsider the potential ramifications of HB 68 and to safeguard the rights and well-being of families like mine, who rely on the compassionate and informed care provided by organizations such as the Cleveland Clinic.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sage McMillan