



Pro-Choice Ohio

Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Government Oversight Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony in opposition to House Bill 68 today. My name is Jaime Miracle. I am the Deputy Director for Pro-Choice Ohio, a statewide organization that advocates for abortion rights and reproductive freedom for all Ohioans. I am providing this testimony today on behalf of our staff, volunteers, and supporters across the state, to ensure that Ohioans have access to the healthcare they need to be healthy and thrive in our state.

House Bill 68 is about blocking access to critical, lifesaving health care services. It is really that simple. But unfortunately to the people it will impact, it is not simple at all. In 2023 more than 400 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced around the county. Time and time again Trans folks and the people who love and support them have had to come before committees like this one and demand that their humanity, their basic existence be recognized, and today is no different. Once again trans Ohioans and the people who love and care for them have bravely come before this committee to share their stories. People should not have to come before legislative committees to demand access to healthcare, but here we are once again, doing just that.

These legislative attacks don't just impact things happening in the statehouse, but community events around the state and the country have come under attack because of the anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric that come out of hearings like those around this bill. Neo-Nazi's have targeted Drag Story Hours. Terrorists have protested adult only Drag fundraisers from LGBTQ+ organizations. Just like the decades of anti-abortion rhetoric have caused deep harm to people who have abortions and those who provide that life-saving essential health care, the heightened rhetoric around anti-LGBTQ+ bills has caused folks in our community to fear for their safety and the safety of their loved ones. I encourage you to think about the damage that is caused by the words that you use, and the attacks and inflammatory rhetoric you are spreading with bills like this one.

Gender affirming care is life affirming care, and it includes a broad process that doesn't just include medical intervention but social transitioning, which is completely reversable, mental health care, in addition to medical intervention that is most often discussed with bills like this. Providing gender affirming care has an overwhelmingly positive effect on transgender youth and their families, especially when it comes to their mental health. This care is recommended by medical experts as evidenced-based patient care. I have personally witnessed as several people I love have been able to access gender affirming care, and the deep positive effect it has had on their health and overall well-being. Being able to finally live their truth and be who they are after so many years of having to hide their true selves – I have seen them blossom like a beautiful flower and it has been an honor to walk this path with them, providing love and support along the way.

But unfortunately, none of matters for this legislature. Just like the Ohio Legislature has done time and again on abortion rights, politicians think they know better than parents, patients, and medical professionals who spent years in training to become the experts in their field. Once again, this legislature is putting itself in the examination room between a patient and their doctor, and this will have devastating effects on health care outcomes, just like the devastating impacts we saw when the six-week abortion ban went into effect for 82 days last year.

There has been so much talk about the rights of parents in the debate around this bill, and yes this bill is about parent's rights, but not in the way that its being framed by the bill's supporters. This bill is putting the Ohio Legislature in the role of parent and denying parents the right to take care of their child. This is an anti-parental rights bill at its core, blocking parents across our state from getting the healthcare they know is best for their child.

The Ohio Legislature is not experts in medically appropriate, evidence-based health care, but with this bill and so many others we have seen over the last decades this legislature demands that they are between a patient and the medical professional providing care, no matter what harm they will cause. This cannot be allowed to continue.

We urge a NO vote on House Bill 68.