

**Opponent Testimony for HB 68 - Written Only
Senate Government Oversight Committee
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To Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and fellow members of the Senate Government Oversight Committee,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify. My name is Harley Rubin, and I use he/him or they/them pronouns. I am a transgender person, a registered voter in Cleveland Heights, and a Master of Social Work student at Case Western Reserve University. I am also the MSW Student Representative for the Ohio chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. I am here to urge you to oppose HB 68, which would ban gender-affirming care for minors. In this testimony, I want to focus on the reality of gender-affirming care for youth because there has been so much misinformation surrounding this topic.

Detransition is the act of reverting gender-affirming care and one's identity as a transgender person. While it has been exaggerated to seem like a major issue, the truth is that gender-affirming care is rarely regretted. In a 2022 longitudinal study, researchers found that five years after their initial social transition, **only 2.5% of transgender youth chose to revert to their genders assigned at birth** (Olson et al., 2022). The vast majority of transgender youth are not confused or simply going through a phase. Youth who pursue gender-affirming interventions like puberty blockers are also advised by medical professionals and supported by their parents. There are clinical standards to meet a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, and this decision is not taken lightly.

Gender-affirming care can truly be lifesaving. In a groundbreaking 2023 randomized clinical trial of 64 transgender and gender-diverse adults, researchers found **a clinically significant decrease in depression and suicidality in the experimental group**

that was able to receive gender-affirming care right away, instead of waiting three months. For youth who understand their identities early on, delays in care, like those HB 68 would cause, could be life-threatening. As a social worker, and as a transgender person myself, preventing youth suicide is incredibly important to me.

HB 68 made me reflect on my own experience as a transgender adolescent. I couldn't pursue gender-affirming care, faced pushback from my family and peers, and found myself in states of deep despair and depression many times. When I was 15, I reached a breaking point where I attempted to take my life. I felt sure that I could not exist in this world as my true self, that I could never face the world as who I am. I might not have survived if I hadn't posted a note about it on Facebook. An anonymous friend called the police, and an ambulance rushed to my house. I was disoriented and dizzy, fell into a coma for two days, and was admitted to the hospital for a week, one of many hospitalizations I have been through for suicidal ideation.

Since fully accepting my identity and receiving the care that I desperately needed, I have not attempted suicide or been hospitalized. **Gender-affirming care changed my life. I can say from personal experience that trans healthcare is life-saving.**

I would like to take a moment for you all to think about the children and youth in your life. Is there any reason you would want them to feel like I felt, to feel unsupported and unloved to the point of taking their own life? This is the reality for the transgender youth in our state. Simply proposing HB 68 has made trans youth the target of discrimination and brought up their existence for public debate. It is incredibly difficult to watch this play out in real time when the legislation could directly, negatively impact you or your loved ones.

Committee members, please choose to protect transgender youth and their right to autonomy, support, and gender-affirming care. I urge you to oppose HB 68.

Thank you so much for your time.

References

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