

In Opposition to Section 333.13 of House Bill 96

Before the Senate Finance Committee

Ciara Aune

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to present opponent testimony today.

My name is Ciara Aune. I'm a transgender woman and a concerned Ohioan. I want to speak against the harmful and cruel anti-trans provisions in this bill, specifically section 333.13 which would block funding for mental health services that promote or affirm social gender transition.

To be clear from the start, gender transition saves lives. According to resources gathered by Advocates for Trans Equality, "leading medical groups recognize the medical necessity of treatments for gender dysphoria and endorse such treatments" (A4TE, 2024). These treatments are not new. Modern treatment was being researched and developed at least as far back as the 1910's (Schillace, 2021). This is well-established science and I urge you to allow medical and mental health professionals to make the decision about whether their patients would benefit from gender-affirming treatment.

When I was a child, I didn't have access to gender affirming care resources. I grew up in a time and place where it was quite clear that if I told people that I wished I were a girl, it would have been both socially and physically dangerous for me. To protect myself, I hid those feelings from everyone, including myself. My parents didn't know. My teachers didn't know. My friends didn't know. I buried those feelings so deeply that I even convinced myself that they didn't exist. I then spent the next 25 years playing the part of a cisgendered man. Of course, repressing a core part of oneself rarely goes well. I ended up depressed for most of those 25 years. I considered suicide several times but managed to convince myself not to go through with it. Imagine being unable to feel joy. That was my everyday existence for 25 years. Over the years, I tried the standard treatments for depression: therapy, medication, exercise, new hobbies, etc. Nothing helped.

In 2023, with the support of my therapist, I finally started thinking about my gender. I thought about how I had felt as a child and other signs throughout my life. I concluded that I must be transgender. I started transitioning in late 2023 and it's been the most incredible improvement in my life. I'm finally happy. The depression that I had for 25 years is gone. I now regularly experience joy that I couldn't have dreamed of before. Without my therapist helping me through that, I would either still be depressed, or I would be dead.

This provision would affect all transgender Ohioans but it especially breaks my heart to think about the transgender kids going through this right now. They are just like I was. They have the potential to be happy now if given supportive, science-based care. Please don't condemn transgender kids or any transgender person to a lifetime of depression, or worse. Their lives are in your hands. I urge this committee: do not take funding away from gender-affirming mental health services.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I welcome any questions you may have.

A4TE. (2024). *Medical Organization Statements on Transgender Health Care—Trans Health Project*. <https://transhealthproject.org/resources/medical-organization-statements/>

Schillace, B. (2021, May 10). *The Forgotten History of the World's First Trans Clinic*. Scientific American. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-forgotten-history-of-the-worlds-first-trans-clinic/>