

Chairman Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and all members of the Senate Medicaid Committee: I thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Evelyn Holbert, I am a member of Trans Unity Coalition. I am here today to speak against Section 9.05 and Section 333.13 concerning youth shelters and mental health facilities. I'm 28 years old. I'm an Ohioan born and raised. I'm also transgender, and many years ago now I was a trans child. I do apologize but my story is going to be a bit disturbing.

I didn't know what being trans was at the time, but I knew I wasn't a boy and didn't want to act like one either. This meant I was treated differently by people, especially my parents.

My parents are the worst people I know. I remember a morning at the age of 11 in which my father forced me out into his backyard. He shaved my head while calling me slurs and repeatedly punching me. Things like that happened so often to me it didn't even stick out at the time.

My mother was much worse. She once told me her life would have been happy if I wasn't alive anymore. She stabbed me, concussed me, and did still worse things than that. She kicked me out of my house weekly.

I had nowhere to go living in a rural county and no one to turn to so I always came back and begged to be let back in. This became a sort of game she played with me as she always knew I would come back. Back to the person who wished I would just die. Contemplating suicide became a comfort for me. The thought of not feeling all this pain anymore was the only happiness I ever got. All of these things I faced utterly alone. I still to this day do not know how I made it to adulthood.

This is the reality that trans children live in. We as a community face significantly higher rates of violence, assault, murder, and suicide. Abusive or unstable homes are the MOST cited reason for trans children showing up in these youth shelters. What we are discussing making law today will force these children back onto the street and back into the hands of their abusers. People like my parents. The restrictions on mental healthcare facilities will force these children to face these things alone. Deeming them not worth the trouble of caring for. This will kill Ohio's children. All to stop people from calling a child by a name that makes them happy.

My story is a cautionary tale of what many trans children face, and what they will inevitably go through if they do not get the support they desperately need. Not every parent loves their child as I'm sure the parents in this room do. I will live with the scars of what I went through for the rest of my life. They will never truly heal. This doesn't have to be the case for our children now. I ask this committee to strike all these anti-trans and anti-human provisions from this bill.

Thank you for your time. I will answer questions now if there are any.