

## Opposition Testimony to Ohio HB 68 the Ohio Saving Adolescents from Experimentation (SAFE) Act

**To:** Chair Lipps, Vice-Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston & Members of the Public Health Policy Committee  
**From:** Colleen Austin  
**Dated:** May 24, 2023

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**Context and Basis for Testimony** I am 59 years old and married. I have raised two wonderful daughters. I have 30 years of professional experience and an MBA in International Business. I moved to Columbus a little over two years ago and consider myself a proud Ohioan. In summary, I am smart, well educated, obviously acquainted with the subject matter. I have been through the joys, anger, hope, fears, triumphs, and setback of raising children. I am here to speak in opposition to the proposed bill.

**The Incidence of Gender Affirming Surgery and Hormone Treatment in Minors is Growing but Still Low** Komodo Health, Inc. recently analyzed public health data on behalf of Reuters. They had access to full or partial health insurance claims for about 330 million U.S. patients over the five years from 2017 to 2021, including patients covered by private health plans and public insurance like Medicaid. They looked at things like gender dysphoria diagnoses, use of puberty blockers, hormone treatments, and genital surgery. What they found is that the incidence across all areas that they reviewed had increased significantly, more than doubling in most areas. Still the numbers are low.

Topic	USA	Ohio*
- Gender dysphoria diagnoses	121,882	4,312 (0.17%)
- Puberty blockers use	4,780	169 (<0.01%)
- Hormone therapy	14,726	521 (<0.01%)
- Mastectomies	776	27 (~0%)
- Genital Surgery	56	2 (~0%)

\* Ohio has 2,586,333 children under 18

These numbers are over a five-year period. They are small. They do not merit this level of attention, which brings me to my next point.

**Inappropriate Use of Government Resources and Overreach** Ohio has bigger fish to fry. Violent crime come to mind. An epidemic of car theft... I read that Columbus does not even tow abandoned cars because the impound lots are full. Ten people shot in Columbus two weeks ago. Long-term COVID. Homelessness. The opioid epidemic. Public education. All topics that merit more of your attention than this.

Do not conflate with my opinions on where your time would be better spent with my feelings for our children. I care deeply about the health and welfare of our children. It may surprise you to learn that I am not in favor of gender affirming surgery under 18 and have mixed feelings about puberty blockers and hormones. Truthfully, I do not know enough about hormone therapy and puberty blockers to generate an informed opinion. And neither, I daresay, do you. But you know who does? The combined teams of the child, their parent,

and their medical team. That is where the decision should lie. So why are you meddling?

Bigotry Against the  
Transgender  
Community and  
Targeting the Most  
Vulnerable of Us

Ohio is, at this time, run by the Republicans. And the Republicans sure have their hate on against the transgender population. They are coming after us in the doctor's office, following us into the bathroom, and chasing us off the athletic field. They speak of wanting to eradicate us. We are 0.6% of the population and the fear and hate is so rampant. We are the new boogeymen. The ignorance and bigotry is palpable. Even the name of this bill, Saving Adolescents from Experimentation, is blatant fearmongering. The transgender gender affirming standard of care is increasingly well known and far from "experimentation." So what is this bill really about? It is not because this is a huge issue; I showed that the numbers are small. It is not that we do not have alternative controls; the standard of care is continually refined and the child/parent/medical team can make appropriate decisions. It is not that you do not have bigger issues to address. It is just the hate and it is easier to spread the fearmongering and go after the kids than the adults.

Shame on all of you for participating in this travesty

Conclusions

Stop the Hate. This bill purposefully targets transgender children and their families; it hurts, not helps. The numbers of transgender children seeking gender affirming medical care are small and we already have mechanism to ensure that they get appropriate medical care. Vote no on this bill.