

Testimony of Elizabeth Beversdorf

Before Ohio House of Representative

House of Public Health Policy Committee

Re: HB 68

May 24, 2023

To the Committee Members present for the hearing on HB 68, my name is Beth and I live in a small town in between Dayton and Cincinnati with my husband and three children. I have worked in a hospital as a speech language pathologist for 13 years. When we aren't working or attending school, you can often find our family cheering on FC Cincinnati, grilling out in the backyard, coaching or playing for the local rec soccer team, or volunteering at the school book fair. Our kids love to ride bikes with their friends, trade pokemon cards, swim at summer camp, and visit our local library. We are, by so many accounts, a typical midwestern family.

At a very young age, one of our children began to express feelings of gender dysphoria. Assigned male at birth, our youngest began to say she was "a boy on the outside but a girl on the inside" as young as four. At the time we didn't think much of it, assuming some children explore the boundaries of gender in more pronounced ways than others, however, these feelings did not lessen, but only intensified as she aged. At the age of five, my daughter was already expressing feelings of distress telling me one night "maybe it would be better if I wasn't here" and asking me one day "do you think I'm going to hell?"

Our child had no idea what "being transgender" was. She had no access to social media, did not know anyone in her life with gender dysphoria, and did not even know the term "transgender." Like any parent would, my husband and I talked, reflected, sought the council of family, and reached out to professionals for help. We consider ourselves lucky to live so close to a world-renowned pediatric hospital that has a gender clinic where we found help and evidence-based guidance. We were able to get our child into a counselor, found assistance via a social worker, and were given resources including support groups. Our journey is far from over, but in only a matter of months of receiving gender affirming care, our daughter's mood was uplifted and we had back our happy, creative, artistic, and bubbly child. To be clear, her care involves following her lead, allowing her to be her true self, and socially transitioning appearance and name. No one has ever suggested anything that is not reversible at her age and no one has ever pressured us into anything she didn't want herself.

One moment I will never forget is when she realized there were other people like her. For years, YEARS my child thought she was the only one. The only person in the whole world who was "born in the wrong body" (in her words). I cannot imagine that level of loneliness, and to this day, the only thing I regret is not making an appointment at Cincinnati Children's sooner. We would be lost without guidance, without access to resources and professionals who are able to

help us, and if these things are taken away from us, we will lose children like mine. No one knows my child better than my husband and me. No one is better qualified to make decisions in her best interest than us. No one should have to watch their child be used as a political pawn. No one should have to hear their child say "maybe it would be better if I wasn't here." Don't take away the exact tools we need to support her. Everyone who meets her falls in love with her. She is a bright light in what can feel like a dark world sometimes. Please don't be part of the reason her light dims. I urge you to oppose this ban on gender affirming care.

Elizabeth Beversdorf
Ohio Resident