

Opponent Testimony for HB68
Health Policy Committee
May 24, 2023

Abs Burkle

Chairperson Lipps, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Public Health Policy Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Abs and I use all pronouns. I am from northeast Ohio, and I am a gender fluid teen. I am finishing my freshman year in high school. I am a member of my school's vocal music program and drama club. I sing professionally with the Cleveland Orchestra Youth and Chamber Choruses. I am studying abroad this summer, and I plan to be a history teacher. I think it is incredibly important for students to learn about major moments in history, such as the history we are making here and now, whether good or bad. My sister, mom, and grandma are here with me today and my dad is supporting us from overseas and we all oppose House Bill 68.

My parents moved to Ohio a year before I was born. Their intentions were to finish graduate school and move on. However, they immediately found a great community and put down roots. My mom found a great job in healthcare and my dad was able to find a job in education and continue his military career. Where we live there are amazing opportunities for our entire family. My parents volunteer at our church, my mom volunteers with the PTA, my grandparents live within walking distance of our house, there are museums, and theaters, and so many things to do that sometimes we have a hard time choosing just one activity to be a part of. As I have grown up, I have started putting down my own roots. I made friends and joined my own communities such as youth theater programs, after-school programs and clubs, and The Cleveland Orchestra Choruses.

My little sister is trans and would be directly impacted by this bill. Not only would she be impacted, but my entire family would be impacted as well. We would have to leave everything we have ever known and move away from friends and family to make sure my little sister gets the care she so greatly needs and deserves. We would have to sell our house and move to a new state, where we know nobody. I would enter high school as a sophomore knowing no one. I would have to leave my vocal music department and drama club families. I would have to give up my spot on the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Chorus. My parents would have to find new jobs. My dad would probably have to retire from the military. We would have to leave my grandparents behind, even though they just moved here three years ago to be closer to us.

Imagine if this was your family. Imagine if this was your story. This is my family's story, but this is also the story of the other approximately 6,000 transgender youth in Ohio who could be impacted by this disgusting bill (Conron, 2020). As you have heard from so many and will continue to hear from others, gender affirming care saves lives and banning care takes lives. Parents and doctors know what is best for these kids, let them make these decisions and do what is right for their children, just as you would want to do if your child needed life saving medical care. I urge you to vote no on House Bill 68. Thank you.

Conron, K.J. (2020) LGBT Youth Population in the United States. UCLA School of Law Williams Institute.

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBT-Youth-US-Pop-Sep-2020.pdf>