

Opposition Testimony HB 68
Public Health Policy Committee
May 24, 2023
Submitted by: Maeve Gallagher Columbus, Ohio

Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to present my testimony in opposition to House Bill 68. My name is Maeve Gallagher and I'm a Columbus Ohio resident. Seeing as this is my first time testifying, it would be fair to say do not insert myself into these matters very often, however, this one in particular troubles me dearly.

My little sibling struggles with gender dysphoria and has recently started working under the Thrive program at the children's hospital. They are the sweetest most selfless soul I have ever met. I've watched them go through hell trying to figure out how to live in a world where they have never felt like they belonged. I wouldn't be here if I didn't see their very real and very devastating struggle with my own eyes. Thrive has helped them navigate through their struggle so much. I am here because I am frightened as I see suicide rate for teens rising. I care about people. I care about my family. This has nothing to do with politics. This bill would hurt so many human beings in a very real and painful way. I would give my life for my little sibling. This bill would take their life from them. I couldn't bear to watch that happen. All they want is to exist and to belong. That is all. but they can't. I don't want to see my best friend in the world stop smiling. They're only sixteen years old. It would break my heart.

To conclude my statement on HB 68 I would like to say with confidence that the state of Ohio is not just a place, but a home. Unfortunately I cannot, because for many it is far from it. I hope I am not alone in my desire to strive towards a world in which all beings can flourish and find beauty and love, rather than hate and fear in the fact of one another's existence. Creating communities of care and understanding is the only way to achieve this because it promotes accepting spaces where all people can share and learn and grow. It nourishes our natural inclinations towards empathy, and love. Gender affirming care is like a lighthouse in a vast ocean. It helps people find their way home. Without it they would be lost. And when you're lost at sea, more often than not, you drown. I am frightened by this fact, for I know the most wonderful, and brilliantly kind human being who is trying to find their way home too, and so I beg of you, please don't let them drown.