

Rey Hicks
Cincinnati, Ohio

**Testimony of Rey Hicks Against H.B. 68
May 21, 2023**

Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Stewart, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the committee, it is a privilege to be able to share my testimony with you. Although I will be unable to attend the hearing of H.B. 68 on May 24th, I hope that my message will be heard by the committee. My name is Rey Hicks, and I am a 20-year-old student at the University of Cincinnati. I was born in Cincinnati, briefly lived here in Columbus, then spent a few years living overseas in China and Singapore; though Cincinnati, Ohio is where I have always called home. I had a Christian upbringing, where I was taught the value of empathy and love, values that I still carry to this day.

I attended public school in the Cincinnati suburbs starting in middle school (2015), where after starting my third year I realized that this was the first time I had attended any school for more than 2 consecutive years. I like to think that I had a great high school experience; I excelled academically placing near the top of my graduating class, I ran in Men's Varsity sports, and I played the Bassoon in orchestra. I even had the opportunity to play alongside the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra at the beautiful Music Hall in downtown Cincinnati. Despite all of these achievements, something felt missing inside of me. At the age of 20 I am transgender woman and feeling more myself than ever before.

This transition didn't occur overnight, on a whim, or through social pressure as some propagandists may have you believe. It took almost a year of counseling and the approval from my therapist and doctor before I could begin Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) in October of 2022. Though I pursued this care as a young adult, some people may need this medical care earlier than I did, which is why I strongly oppose H.B. 68. I believe that trans youth, with the help from medical professionals, should have the ability to make medically informed decisions about their bodies, and the S.A.F.E Act prevents that.

Let me first address the title of the legislation: the "Saving Adolescents from Experimentation Act". Trans medicine is by no means experimental. Many of the medications that this bill labels as "experimental" have been used for many years in trans medicine, and are even more commonly used among cisgender patients. For example, the two medications that I take, estradiol valerate and spironolactone, are commonly prescribed to cisgender women to alleviate symptoms of menopause and reduce acne respectively. Puberty blockers have been used for decades and have demonstrated themselves to be a low risk and effective way of slowing puberty. Puberty blockers are commonly used on children who begin puberty too early, which could cause other health issues to develop if not treated properly. I would urge the committee to let researchers, doctors, and patients decide which medications are best for their health, not the state of Ohio.

Although I was unable to attend the opponent hearing on May 24th, I was in attendance for the proponent hearing on April 26th. I heard the testimonies of concerned parents, detransitioned adults, and morally outraged voters. Although they did not know, I sat and endured hours of their testimonies where I was called mentally ill, told that I was mutilating my body, and even called a demonic presence. Despite these profanities and gross judgments on my body, I am not a hateful person. I do believe these people have been hurt in one way or

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another, and I empathize with their struggles; but we cannot write legislation that is driven by individual experiences, fear, and hate.

We heard the testimonies of multiple parents who were “concerned” about their transgender child all while misgendering them at the podium. I would ask these parents, where is your child now? What would your child have to say about their journey? What would your child’s recollection of events be compared to your own? Why is it that so many transgender children decide to go no-contact with their parents when they become adults? I feel nothing but sadness for the parents who find themselves alone, and would encourage them to look inside themselves and think why the relationship with their child has struggled so much. We must remember that their child is a person too, and there are often two sides to their story.

We also heard testimonies from three detransitioned women who all expressed that they feel they had been lied to and deceptively forced into transition. In their testimonies, they described their bodies as being mutilated and broken; they talked about how masculine-looking their bodies became, and how they may never be able to have children. I empathize with these women as, ironically, these are all the same feelings transgender women like myself often face. Transgender women often feel as though we are too masculine, like our bodies don’t conform to the person that we are (which is why many of us begin medical transition). I would like to say that womanhood is not a list of superficial traits that someone must meet to be considered a woman. Cisgendered women may have double mastectomies, or the inability to have a child due to medical conditions. Women have the ability of being tall, having broad shoulders, and deep voices. Do we consider people with these traits anything less than a woman? I would argue that transgender people’s existence is not the problem; it’s control over women’s bodies and strict policing over how to be a woman.

I would ask the committee members to consider that all three of these detransitioned women do not live in the state of Ohio, have no experience with the healthcare systems in Ohio, and will move on from Ohio when this bill is concluded. The Ohio Legislature should not be writing bills to protect Xandra, Prisha, and Chloe specifically, but should be writing bills to protect the people of Ohio. These bills affect people like me, people that I personally know, and would damage their ability to exist in Ohio healthily. I would strongly urge committee members to not fall prey to a miniscule but vocal minority of grifters who have no regard for the wellbeing of the people of Ohio.

This bill is poorly written and anti-scientific. This is evident in how the bill defines the term ‘sex’, which is used throughout the bill. Sec. 3129.01 clause (A) states that “ ‘Biological sex,’ ‘birth sex,’ and ‘sex’ mean the biological indication of male and female, including sex chromosomes, naturally occurring sex hormones, gonads, and unambiguous internal and external genitalia present at birth without regard to an individual’s psychological, chosen, or subjective experience of gender”. I would raise that Intersex people exist, people with chromosome abnormalities exist, people with hormone conditions exist, people with ambiguous genitalia exist. This bill attempts to draw a solid line where it is impossible to do so. I may be considered radical to some, but I would argue that regulating people’s bodies based on what types of gametes someone produces is reductive and gross.

This bill puts trans youth in harm's way, allowing abusive parents to hold custody over their children even as they prevent them from receiving best practice medicine. These abusive parents are often asked by medical professionals if they would prefer a transgender child or a

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dead child, and many choose the latter. We must not allow children to be denied life saving medicine, and that is exactly what H.B. 68 aims to accomplish.

Trans youth are often told the lie that they are too young to begin transition, and then later are told that they will never be 'X' because they didn't transition earlier. It's a cycle that leaves trans youth and trans people feeling forgotten, feeling like their feelings don't matter, and feeling like they have no say in their own bodily autonomy. Though I have been able to get the medical care that I, and my medical counsel, believe that I need, it is important not to forget the trans youth in Ohio who feel like they don't have power over their own body. Thank you for your time.